



STUDY ON BREAST FEEDING PRACTICES AMONG POSTNATAL WOMEN IN A TERTIARY CARE HOSPITAL IN SOUTH INDIAN CITY

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ABSTRACT

A hospital based cross sectional study was designed to know knowledge, attitude and practices of Breast feeding among post natal women in post natal wards of tertiary care Hospital in south Indian city. Interview technique was used as a tool for collection of the data information. A total of 100 postnatal mothers were included in the study. Among them 22% were illiterates. Majority of the mothers (67%) were housewives. 78% post natal women were living in joint families. 55% of post natal women who had normal delivery answered that breast feeding should be given within 1 hr of delivery, 65% should be given within 4 hrs of caesarean section. Only 50% women said that colostrum feed should be given. 50% of the women had received advice on breastfeeding during antenatal period. And in that, only 17% from a healthcare worker; so, it is reinforced that we require more policies to educate the mothers regarding breast feeding practices.

KEYWORDS; Postnatal mothers Breastfeeding, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice



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INTRODUCTION

Mother and infant form a biological unit. Breast feeding is an integral part of the reproductive process. It is the natural and ideal way of feeding the infant and provides a unique biological and emotional basis for healthy child development. It increases close relationship with mother known as bonding¹. Breast feeding is highly nutrient, anti-infective and consists of immunoglobulin, so it is protective against childhood infections. The new WHO recommendation is of exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months and complementary feeding after 6 months of age.²

In the world of affluent societies, breast feeding appears to have become a lost art and the feeding bottle has usurped the breast which is hazardous to health. It is important to advise mother to avoid feeding bottles. It is our responsibility to encourage and protect breast feeding, to protect pregnant women, lactating mothers from any influences that could disrupt it.

The favorable effects of breast-feeding on child health are well known. There is an abundance of evidence showing that breast milk decreases both the incidence and severity of infectious diseases, primarily acute diarrhea^{3,4} and acute respiratory infections^{5,6}. Breast-feeding is also the most appropriate form of nourishment for ensuring adequate growth and development during the first 6 months of life⁷. Moreover, it produces indirect health benefits for both the mother and her child by prolonging the intervals between pregnancies, decreasing fertility⁸, and reducing expenditures on feeding and medical care.

Poor breastfeeding practices are widespread. It is estimated that sub-optimal breastfeeding, especially non-exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months of life, results in 1.4 million deaths and 10% of the disease burden in children younger than 5 years of age⁹. Reviews of studies from developing countries show that infants who are not breastfed are 6 to 10 times more likely to die in the first months of life than infants who are breastfed^{10,11}. The extent to

which breast-feeding's beneficial effects are realized, however, depends on whether breast-feeding is initiated, its duration, and the age at which the breast-fed child is weaned^{6, 12}.

With this background, this study is an attempt to know the breast feeding practices of the postnatal mothers admitted in Obstetrics Department of Princess Esra Hospital, Shalibanda, Hyderabad and to know about the factors which affect the early breast feeding and about the prelacteal feeds.

Aim of the study

To study breast feeding practices among postnatal women in Princess Esra Hospital, Hyderabad

Objectives

- 1) To find out socio demographic and cultural profile of the study population
- 2) To know about the breast feeding practices in the study population.

Materials and Methods

The present cross sectional study was carried out in the postnatal wards of obstetrics and Gynecology department at Princess Esra Hospital, Shalibanda Hyderabad. Interview technique was used as a tool for collection of the data information. A Pilot study was conducted to test the feasibility of the study. And the actual study was started after making necessary corrections.

Study population

Every 10th case entered in the register maintained in the labour ward was included in the study. Mothers, who lost their babies, were excluded from the study. Informed consent was obtained from all mothers. A total of 100 mothers were interviewed. Data were collected by 2nd year medical students who were trained in data collection technique.

RESULTS**Study design**

This study was done as a Hospital based cross-sectional study.

Sample size estimation

Patients admitted in one month in the Gynaecology and obstetrics department interviewed.

Study period:01/11/11-30/11/11.

EPI INFO, MS EXCEL were used for analysis.

A total of 100 postnatal mothers were included in the study. Their age ranges from 19 to 35 with an average of 24.6 years (± 3.36 years). Among the mothers 22% were illiterates. 78% post natal women were living in joint families. 95% of the study population were housewives. All of the study population were fully dependant on the families.(Table:1)

Table:1
Demographic information of the respondents

Literacy	No.	Percent
Illiterate	22	22
Primary school	17	17
Secondary school	49	49
Intermediate	5	5
Graduate	7	7
Family type		
Nuclear	22	22
Joint	78	78
Occupation		
Employed	4	4
House wife	95	95
Others	1	1

Table:2
Association between Family type and Breast feeding information

Family type	Breast feeding information received.	
	Yes	No
Nuclear family(n=22)	14(63.6%)	8(26.4%)
Joint family(n=78)	72(92.3%)	6(7.7%)

$\chi^2=11.72$ $df=1$ $p<0.001$

Maximum Mothers in joint families received information regarding breast feeding but in nuclear families only 63% have received information and this association is found to be significant.(Table:2)

Table:3
Parity Status of Respondent mothers

Parity	No.	Percent
Primi	33	33
Second	32	32
Third	20	20
>3	15	15
No. of Abortions	No.	Percent
1	23	23
2	5	5
3	1	1
None	71	71

15% of the study population were multipara 29% of the post natal women had abortions in the past (Table:3)

KNOWLEDGE OF BREAST FEEDING AMONG STUDY POPULATION

55% of post natal women who had normal delivery answered that breast feeding should be given within 1 hr of delivery.65% of post natal women who had caesarean section answered that breast feeding should be given within 4 hrs of caesarean section.Only 50% women said that colostrum feed should be given. Only 49% post natal women think that prelacteal feeds should not be given.80% of women think that water should be given to the new born.

Only 45% have knowledge regarding demand feeds.Only 38% of the subjects said that

exclusive breast feeding should be done for 6 months.Only 30% know about expressed breast milk None of the subjects have answered correctly regarding storage of expressed breast milk.42% post natal mothers don't know that breast feeding benefits mothers also. Approximately 2/3rd of post natal mothers don't know the contraceptive advantage of breast feeding.50% of the study population said that breast feeding should be stopped if the mother is sick.38% of study population said that breast feeding should be stopped if the baby is having diarrhoea and 50% said that lactation should be stopped if the baby is having vomitings. (Table-4)

Table-4
KNOWLEDGE OF BREAST FEEDING AMONG STUDY POPULATION

Sl. No	Factor	% of women answered correctly
1	Time of initiation of breastfeeding	
	a) After normal delivery	55%
	b) After caesarean section	65%
2	Colostrum feeding	50%
3	Prelacteal feeds	49%
4	Water during first 6 months	20%
5	Adequacy of breastfeeding	91%
6	Knowledge about demand feeds	45%
7	Duration of exclusive breastfeeding	38%
8	Knowledge on expressed breastmilk	30%
9	Technique of expressing breastmilk	34%
10	Storage of expressed breastmilk in room temperature	nil
11	Knows benefits of breastfeeding	
a)	To baby	100%
b)	To mother	58%
12	OCPs while lactating	60%
13	Breastfeeding and obesity	96%
14	Ideal position for breastfeeding	100%
15	Informs doctors about lactation status before obtaining prescription for drugs	71%
16	Continuation of breastfeeding when	
	a) mother is sick	50%
	b) mother is menstruating	90%
	c) baby has fever/cold	80%
	d) baby has diarrhea	62%
	e) baby has vomiting	50%

Attitudes and Beliefs regarding Breast feeding

Majority(70%) of the post natal mothers have expressed that breast feeding protects child from infection and 89% said that breast feeding

is healthiest for infants.10% said that breast feeding is old fashioned.27% said that breast feeding is embarrassing .77% of the study population said that breast milk is the best milk (Table-5)

Table-5
Attitudes and Beliefs regarding Breast feeding practices

General Beliefs	Yes Number(%)	No Number(%)
Breast feeding protects child from infection	70(70%)	30(30%)
Breast feeding is old fashioned	10(10%)	90(90%)
Breast milk is best milk	77(77%)	23(23%)
Breast feeding is embarrassing	27(27%)	73(73%)
Breastfeeding is healthiest for infant	89(89%)	11(11%)

Breast feeding practices

Only 36% of the mothers have breast fed their babies in the stipulated time. Majority of Literates have breast fed their babies with in stipulated time when compared with illiterates and this was found to be statistically significant. Majority of the literate mothers (~80%) have given colostrum feeding to the

babies when compared with illiterate mothers and this association between literacy status and colostrum feeding was found to be significant.

Literacy levels even found to be associated with prelacteal feeds as more illiterate mothers were found to give prelacteal feeds than literate mothers. (Table-6)

Table-6
Association between Literacy status and Breast feeding practices

Factor	Literacy levels		Statistical significance
	Illiterates(n=22)	Literates(n=78)	
Breast feeding Started with in stipulated time	Yes	4(18.1%)	X ² =3.89 P<0.05
	No	18(81.9%)	
Colostrum feeding given	Yes	12(54.5%)	X ² =5.55 p<0.001
	No	10(45.5%)	
Prelacteal feeds given	Yes	16(72.8%)	X ² =8.11 P<0.05
	No	6(27.2%)	

DISCUSSION

In the present study it was found that all the post natal mothers were breast feeding their infants. Data from the recent national family health survey also indicate that breast feeding is near universal with 98 per cent of infants being breast fed¹³.

Majority of the mothers were ignorant of regarding the ideal time of initiation of breast feeding and the advantages of the same. Similar results were corroborated by Kapileet al¹⁴ in his study.

In India 250,000 neonates can be saved from death annually by just one act – initiation of breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth¹⁵. In the present study it was observed that only 60% of the mothers knew the recommendation of early initiating of breastfeeding and it was also found that literacy levels of the post natal mothers have an influence in initiating breast feeding so it can be advised that breastfeeding and its advantages must be introduced into our educational system at least at the high school level. In the study it was found that only 50% of

mothers have knowledge regarding colostrum feeding.

WHO recommends 6 months of exclusive breastfeeding for infants. But, in our study only 38% of the mothers knew that exclusive breastfeeding should be given for 6 months.

Knowledge about expressed breast milk is required for the mothers such that they can continue to feed their babies and keep up their milk supply if they are separated from their babies⁹.

But in the present study, it was observed that only 30% have knowledge about benefits of expressed breast milk and only 34% know the technique of expressing breastmilk and the striking feature found in the study is no women in the study population know about storage of expressed breast milk. In the urban areas, where working mothers are increasing there lies a pressing need to educate all mothers about the expressed breast milk. 62% of the mothers said that they will continue breast feeding even the baby has diarrhea. It is found to be better when compared with similar study by

Maheswari et al¹⁶.still it is a issue of concern as recovery from diarrhea is influenced by the dietary practices during illness¹⁷.

Majority(70%) of the post natal mothers have expressed that breast feeding protects child from infection and 89% said that breast feeding is healthiest for infants.10% said that breast feeding is old fashioned.27% said that breast feeding is embarrassing .77% of the study population said that breast milk is the best milk.similar results were observed in the study done by Vijay LG et al¹⁸ in a rural area of East Delhi.

Literacy levels of the study population was found to be associated with initiation of breast feeding,colostrum feed and to the prelacteal feeds as literate mothers found to practice

correctly in comparison with illiterates. So there is always a need to focus on female education.

CONCLUSION

Breast feeding was found to be an universal practice in the study population. Literate levels of the post natal mothers found to have influence on breast feeding practices like colostrum feeding and initiation of breast feeding and on giving pre-lacteal feeds. Thus policy makers need to emphasize more on IEC activities on the advantage of breast feeding with more importance on female education. Breast feeding practices should be included as a topic in secondary school.

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