

Maternal knowledge & Attitude Towards Breast Feeding In Najaf

معلومات واتجاهات الأمهات حول الرضاعة الطبيعية في محافظة النجف الاشرف

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الخلاصة:

الأهداف: تقييم معلومات واتجاهات الأمهات بخصوص الرضاعة الطبيعية
الطريقة: أجريت دراسة مقطعية لعينة عشوائية تتكون من ٢٠٠ أم تم اختيارهن عشوائياً من المراكز الصحية ومستشفى الزهراء التعليمي للفترة من الأول من كانون الثاني ٢٠٠٩ ولغاية الأول من كانون الثاني ٢٠١١ وتم استعمال استبيان يتضمن عدة أسئلة تتعلق بالرضاعة الطبيعية. أعمار الأمهات تراوحت بين ١٦-٤٢ سنة وعدد الأطفال لديهن تراوح بين ١-١٠ طفل .
النتائج: لوحظ إن ٩٩% من الأمهات لديهن الرغبة بالرضاعة الطبيعية و ٨٣% منهن حصلن على التشجيع والمعلومات حول الرضاعة الطبيعية من العائلة. أكثر من نصف الأمهات تعرف الوقت الصحيح لأول رضعه بعد الولادة وفوائد الرضاعة الطبيعية للام والطفل وفوائد اللبا ومدة الرضاعة وعدد الرضعات في اليوم . ٤٧% من الأمهات عرفن مدة كل رضعه .
الاستنتاج: الدراسة أظهرت نقص في معلومات الأمهات حول الرضاعة الطبيعية وبعض الممارسات والمعتقدات الخاطئة في إطعام الطفل والتي تسبب فشل الرضاعة الطبيعية. وأعطيت بعض المقترحات والوصايا لإنجاح الرضاعة الطبيعية
التوصيات: زيادة وعي الفتيات قبل سن الزواج حول أهمية الرضاعة الطبيعية وذلك بتدريس علم الرضاعة الطبيعية في المدارس الثانوية. ويمكن زيادة وعي الأمهات بهذا الموضوع عن طريق الندوات التثقيفية والبرامج التوعوية في وسائل الإعلام . بالإضافة إلى دور الأطباء والكوادر التمريضية في المستشفيات والمراكز الصحية.

Abstract

Objectives: to assess the knowledge & attitude of mothers towards breastfeeding.

Methods: a random sample of 200 mothers was selected from Al-Zahraa teaching hospital & from primary health care centers in Najaf city from the period of 1st of January 2009 to 1st of January 2011. A questionnaire was used in the study, which contain information about the demographic data of the mothers & selected questions about their knowledge regarding breast-feeding .data were analyzed using SPSS 9.15 descriptive statistics.

Results: it was found that 99% of mothers have the desire to breast feed their children. 83% of mothers have received the encouragement & information about breast-feeding from their families. More than half of the mothers know correctly the time of the first feed after birth, benefits of breast-feeding to the mother & the baby, benefits of colostrum, duration of breast-feeding & number of feeds per day. Only 28% of mothers know the age of complementary feeding & 47% of them know the duration of each feed.

Conclusion: the study showed a considerable deficiency of the knowledge of mother about breast feeding & explore some of the practices & believes that interfere with the success of breast feeding.

Recommendations :we recommend education about breast feeding be introduced in the school for learning of girls as they will eventually become future mothers, as well as education of the health professionals at all levels . Providing facilities for breast-feeding in the work place & development of community support to breast feeding mothers.

Key words: breast feeding, maternal, knowledge, attitude

INTRODUCTION:

Scientific evidence & research have demonstrated the benefits of breastfeeding for child survival, health & nutrition as well as maternal health & child spacing. National & international authorities recognize that breastfeeding especially exclusive breast feeding for the first 6 months of life & continuing thereafter with appropriate complementary food constitutes an optimal infant feeding practice. Breast milk provides an optimal nutrition & promotes the child's growth & development. It provides protection against diarrhea & infectious diseases, it benefits women's health reduces the risk of post partum hemorrhage, lowers the risk of ovarian & breast cancers& offers psychological benefits because of the emotional bonding between the mother & the infant ⁽¹⁾. While there is resurgence of breast-feeding in many western

countries, there is unfortunately a further decline in breast-feeding in developing countries⁽²⁾. New cultural attitudes towards breasts & women's lack of self confidence & lack of information about breast feeding is well identified factor contributing to decline in breast feeding⁽³⁾. The objectives of this study is to assess the knowledge & attitude of mothers towards breast feeding & to use this as basis for a strategy to promote appropriate knowledge & breast feeding practice among the women in the community.

PATIENTS & METHODS:

A cross sectional study was done on a random sample of 200 mothers. The sample was selected from Al Zahraa teaching hospital & primary health care centers in Najaf city from the period of 1st of January 2009 to 1st of January 2011. The mothers were interviewed by using a well prepared questionnaire include information about the sociodemographic characteristics of the mothers & the important question regarding their knowledge & attitude towards breast feeding such as the right time for the first feed after birth, the frequency & duration of breast feeding, the right time to start complementary feeding, the proper time for weaning & the benefits of colostrum & the benefits of breast feeding to the mother & the infant. Data were analyzed using SPSS 9.15 descriptive statistics.

RESULTS:

The age of the 200 mothers included in the study ranged from 16-42 years (mean 29 years) & the number of children they have ranged from 1-10

Table 1: Demographic data of the mothers

Demographic data	details	Number Total No. 200	Percentage
residence	Rural	30	15%
	urban	170	85%
Level of education	Primary	85	42.5%
	secondary	64	32%
	Higher	17	8.5%
Occupation	Unemployed	191	95.5%
	Employed	9	4.5%
Received information about breast feeding	Yes	92	46%
	No	88	44%
Desire to breast feed her infant	Yes	198	99%
	no	1	1%

One hundred ninety one(95.5%)of the mothers were housewives, 9(4.5%) of them were employed ,85(42.5%)of them had completed the primary education only, 64(32%)had completed secondary education, 17(8.5%) had higher education &34(17%) were not educated .Ninety three (46.5%) had received some information about breast feeding & encouragement from their families including their mothers, 12(10.7%) had received the information from doctors, 7(6.2%)had some information received from television, 88(44%) did not receive any information or encouragement about breast feeding & no one of the mothers said that she learned about breast feeding in the school.

Table 2: The responses of mothers to questions related to breast-feeding.

Questions & responses	number N=200	%
Best time for the first feed after birth		
• Immediately after birth	109	54.5
• Few hours	60	30
• Few days	20	10
• Don't know	11	5.5
Frequency of breast feeding		
• On demand	130	65
• every 3 hours	26	13
• Every 6 hours	38	19
• Don't know	6	3
Duration of each feed		
• Until the baby satisfied	94	47
• 5-10 minutes	15	7.5
• >15 minutes	81	40.5
• Don't know	10	5
Benefits of colostrums		
• Pass the meconium out	31	15.5
• Give immunity to the baby	57	28.5
• Good nutrition	23	11.5
• Decrease the level of bilirubin	2	1
• Don't know	87	43.5
Duration of breast feeding		
• 2years	122	61
• 12-18 months	68	34
• < 6 months	3	1.5
• Don't know	7	3.5
Age of complementary feeding		
• < 4 months	121	60.5
• 6 months	56	28
• > 6 months	18	9
• Don't know	5	2.5

More than half of mother knows the right time of the first feed after birth. 65% of them feed their babies on demand. More than half of mothers (56.5%) know the benefits of colostrum.

Table 3: mothers knowledge about benefits of breast feeding to the baby.

Benefits to the baby	number n=200	%
• gives the baby immunity against diseases	117	58.5
• sterile	35	17.5
• ideal food	34	17
• provide good health to the baby	16	8
• create a bond & love with mother	13	6.5
• enable the infant to grow well	11	5.5
• increase the intelligence	4	2
• warm	2	1
• easily digested	1	0.5
• decrease the level of bilirubin	1	0.5
• don't know	15	7.5

This table showed that 58.5% of mothers know the immunological benefits of breast milk to the infant & 7.5% of mothers did not know the benefits of breast-feeding. Different responses were received regarding other benefits of breast-feeding.

Table 4: mothers knowledge about benefits of breast-feeding to the mother.

Benefits to the mother	number n=200	%
Easy & not need preparation	26	13
Prevent breast & uterine cancer	22	11
Contract the uterus after labor	20	10
Create a bond to the baby	19	9.5
Amenorrhea & contraception	18	9
Psychological benefits	18	9
Prevent breast congestion	9	4.5
Not costly	7	3.5
Make the mother confident	1	0.5
Harmful	33	16.5
Don't know	62	31

This table showed that 16.5% of mothers said that breast-feeding is harmful to the mother & in spite of that they continue to breast feed their infants & 31% of mothers didn't know the benefits to the mother.

DISCUSSION:

In this study 46.5% of mothers had received some encouragement & information about breast feeding from their families mainly from mothers this indicate that the family play a major role in the success of breast feeding. Only one mother had received encouragement from her husband .It was found that a women's decision to start breast feeding her infant may rest her assumption of the father's attitude regarding this feeding method as the perception of a negative paternal attitude towards breast feeding may discourage some women from breast feeding⁽¹⁾. A study done in north Carolina shows that 90% of fathers want their partners to breast feed⁽²⁾. The school seems to have no role in education about breastfeeding. Several studies encourage teaching about breast feeding to school girls to influence their decision to breast feeding^(3,4).

Ninety nine percent of mothers have the desire to breast feed their infants & if this large percent of mothers were encouraged & learned about breast-feeding this will lead to large percent of breast-fed infants. Early suckling is associated with successful establishment & maintenance of breast feeding throughout infancy⁽⁵⁾. More than half of mothers know the right time of the first feed after birth, the mothers who gave the wrong answer said that the baby should receive supplements early in life before the mother starts to feed the baby as water & sugar, formula milk, or water only. Food supplements before starting lactation will cause breast engorgement & decreased milk supply⁽⁶⁾. Good percent of mothers (65%) feed their baby on demand. More than half of mothers (56.5%) know the benefits of colostrum, this is important because it means that most of the mothers gave their infants the colostrums in the first 3 days of life. It is well documented that colostrum is beneficial to the infant both nutritionally & immunologically^(2,4,6). Studies done in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain & Oman showed that the proportion of mothers who started breast feeding at the first hour after birth were 11.5% , 28% &37% respectively because of the belief that colostrum is harmful to the baby⁽⁷⁾ while in our study only one mother said that colostrum is harmful to the baby & 2 mothers said that it has no benefit. Infants weaned early were heavier at age of 7 & 14 months & gained more weight between 8 weeks & 14 months even after breast-feeding was controlled for⁽⁸⁾. This study showed that some of mothers wean their babies early because they return to work & no facilities for breastfeeding at work place, or because of new pregnancy. Only 28%

of mothers start complementary feeding to their babies at the right time (6months) & the majority of mothers started earlier (\leq 4months) & the reasons behind starting foods early as the mothers belief is to make the baby accustomed to the different tastes of food so that he will not refuse it during weaning time & to increase the weight of the infant. Early complementary feeding is associated with risk of food allergy as the baby starts to produce enough intestinal IgA antibodies after 6 months of age to prevent absorption of antigens through the intestinal wall. Other advantages are increased ability of infant to digest food, ease of feeding& decreased risk of infection as diarrhea⁽⁹⁾. Many studies have evaluated besides the time of weaning & complementary feeding ,type & quality & caloric density of food used as complement whereas others recent studies show the importance of appetite differences since the first months of life & the importance of genetic influence on these variations ,it may be necessary to pay attention not only to the date but the kind & quantity of complementary foods⁽¹⁰⁾.

CONCLUSION:

The study showed a considerable deficiency of the knowledge of mother about breast-feeding & explore some of the practices & believes that interfere with the success of breast feeding. Suggestions were given in this study to improve the maternal knowledge.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Education about breast-feeding to be introduced in the school for learning of girls as they will eventually become future mothers, as well as education of the health professionals at all levels to play a role in education of the public in general & mothers in particular. Providing a facilities for breastfeeding in the work place & development of community support to breast feeding mothers.

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