

Original Research Article

Breastfeeding practices among lactating mothers of a rural area of central India: a cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Background: Breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants. As per national family health survey-3 (NFHS-3), only 46% of the Indian infants between 0 and 6 months are exclusively breastfed. Hence the following study was done to know the practice of breastfeeding in mothers of rural area of central India.

Methods: The study was conducted in a rural area, which is under administrative control of tertiary care hospital. All lactating mothers having babies upto 1 year were included in study. An informed written consent was obtained from the mothers.

Results: 78.28% show initiation of breastfeeding within 6 hours of delivery. 51.51% mothers breastfeed child whenever they cry and 35.35% breastfeed every 2 hourly. Exclusive breastfeeding was practiced by 58.58% mothers and 64.15% mothers gave first breast milk to their newborns.

Conclusions: The counseling should be continued after the delivery of baby for continuous education to mother about the proper care of newborn, initiation of breastfeeding, the information regarding the advantages and duration of breastfeeding, importance of colostrums feeding, timing of weaning needs to be provided.

Keywords: Breastfeeding, Colostrum, Concent

INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants. It is also an integral part of the reproductive process with important implications for the health of mothers. Though breast feeding is a common practice in India, it is associated with myths and superstitions.¹

Role of first year of life for laying the foundation of good health in future life is undeniable. Survival and healthy development of child depends on certain physiological and biological needs for which breastfeeding plays an important role.

Health professionals recommend that breastfeeding should begin within the first hour of a baby's life and continue as often and as much as the baby wants. Breastfeeding has a number of benefits to both mother and baby. An adequate supply of human breast milk is known to satisfy virtually all the nutritional needs of an infant at least for the first six months of life. It is easily digestible and facilitates skin to skin contact and physical warmth between mother and child, which further strengthens the emotional bond between them.²

In August 1990, WHO and UNICEF had jointly adopted the Innocenti Declaration on the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding. Exclusive breastfeeding means no drinks like honey, water, glucose water, gripe

water, juices, vitamins, animal or powdered milks or foods other than breast milk are given for first 6 months to the babies.³

In India, more than 11 lakh babies die during the first month of life, and another 5 lakh during 2 to 12 months of age. Neonatal mortality accounts for almost 40% of all under-five deaths and for nearly 60% of infant deaths.⁴ As per national family health survey-3 (NFHS-3), only 46% of the Indian infants between 0 and 6 months are exclusively breastfed. Hence the following study was done to know the practice of breastfeeding in mothers of rural area in central India.

METHODS

The study was conducted in a Wadi rural area, which is an adopted area under administrative control of Community Medicine Department, NKP salve Medical College, Nagpur. The population of the area was 45,523. The study was part of a larger study conducted during period of 2011-2012 for period of 6 months after prior permission from Institute Ethics Committee. All lactating mothers attending rural health training centre OPD during the given period were eligible for the study. An informed written consent was obtained from the mothers. The only exclusion criteria were refusal for giving the consent.

Mothers were interviewed on a predesigned pretested semi-structured 'questionnaire'. The questionnaire included socio-economic and demographic data, details on the initiation and duration of breastfeeding, details on artificial feeding and weaning practices, and new born care practices. A total of 198 mothers were interviewed during the period. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS software.

RESULTS

The socio-demographic characteristics of study participants were shown in Table 1. 62.1% of mothers were below 25 years of age. Most of mothers had education beyond primary school. 68.18% mothers lives in cemented pakka house. 31.3% participants were mother of 3 or more children's. Hospital delivery was preferred way for 78.28% mothers.

When breastfeeding practices assessed from mothers, 78.28% shows initiation of breastfeeding within 6 hours of delivery. 51.51% mothers breastfeed child whenever they cry and 35.35% breastfeed every 2 hourly (Table 2). Exclusive breastfeeding was practiced by 58.58% mothers and 64.15% mother's gave first breast milk i.e. colostrum to their newborns. Still 31.8% mothers feed their child with ghutti, honey, plain water, artificial milk, sugar water etc., before starting breastfeeding.

Table 1: Demographic profile of study population.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Mothers age (years)		
18-25	123	62.1
26-35	62	31.3
>35	13	7.6
Mothers literacy		
Primary schooling or less	66	33.33
Beyond primary schooling	132	66.66
Housing		
Kaccha	63	31.81
Pakka	135	68.18
Socioeconomic status		
Upper	17	8.58
Upper middle	61	30.80
Middle	63	31.81
Lower middle	37	18.68
Lower	20	10.10
Birth order		
1	58	29.29
2	78	39.29
3	44	22.22
4 and above	18	9.1
Place of delivery		
Home	43	21.71
Hospital	155	78.28

Table 2: Breast feeding practices.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
When did you initiate breastfeeding?		
Within 6 hrs	155	78.28
7-24 hrs	31	15.65
25-72 hrs	8	4.04
<7 days	4	2.02
How often did you breastfeed your baby in a day?		
Whenever child cries	102	51.51
Every 2h	70	35.35
Every 4h	21	10.60
Elders advice	5	2.52
How long the child was given exclusive breast feeding?		
<6 months	82	41.41
>6 months	116	58.58
If <6 months give reasons		
Feeling of insufficient milk	14	17.1
Breast infection	13	15.8
Weaning	53	64.6
Baby illness	2	2.4
Did you discard the colostrum?		
Yes	71	35.85
No	127	64.15
If yes specify reasons		
Not good for health	44	62.0
Elders advice	24	33.8
Baby can't suck	3	4.2
Prelacteal feed before starting breastfeeding		
Yes	63	31.8
No	135	68.2
If yes what did you feed		
Ghutti	23	36.5
Honey	31	49.2
Plain water	2	3.2
Artificial milk	4	6.3
Sugar water	2	3.2
Others*	1	1.6

Others*= gripe water, ghee.

DISCUSSION

The current study was undertaken in OPD of field practice area attached to medical college and on lactating mothers having children aged 1 year and less. The findings of the study suggest that 78.28% of the women initiated breastfeeding within 6 hours of delivery. Finding were comparable to study conducted by Singh et al i.e. they found 74.29% mothers initiated breastfeeding within 6 hours but Vyas et al in their study found only 42.95% childrens who breastfeed within 6 hrs.^{2,5}

In our study, 51.51% women breastfeed their child whenever they cried while 35.35% breastfeed every 2 hourly i.e. on demand feeding was more in our study. Singh et al in their study found 42.14% mother breastfeed

when child cries and 44.28% every 2 hourly, higher than on demand feeding.² Vyas et al in their study found 89.10% on demand feeding and Shashank et al shows 73.74% on demand feeding to infants.^{5,6} But Cacodkar et al in their study found only 42% on demand feeding and rest were timely breastfeeding.⁷

58.58% of mothers practices exclusive breastfeeding in our study. The main reason for discontinuation among 64.6% of study subjects was early weaning, 17.1% had feeling of insufficient milk and 15.8 had breast infection.

Singh et al found 80.36% mothers followed exclusive breastfeeding in their study which is very high than our study.² Joshi et al in their study found 63.44% mothers following exclusive breastfeeding even after 6 months

comparable to our study.³ Most common reason for discontinuation was insufficient milk in 49.49% mothers.

64.15% mothers gave colostrums to their children in our study. Similar results were found by Singh et al (63.57%), Davara et al (68.75), Banapurmath et al (71.4%) but Shashank et al (76.61%) and Vyas et al found most of mothers (87.18%) feed colostrums to their child.^{2,5,6,8,9}

31.8% of children in our study received prelacteal feed i.e. honey (49.2%), some ghutti (36.5%) artificial milk (6.3%) before first breast milk. Results were comparable to study conducted by Shashank et al (29.5% prelacteal feed).⁶ In contrast to our study, Singh et al (53%), Vyas et al (61.8%), Ashwini et al (57.11%) shows high percentage of newborn received prelacteal feed before breastfeeding.^{2,5,10} Senthilvel et al (19%) and Madhu et al (19%) found less percentage of newborn who received prelacteal feed and discarded the colostrums.^{11,12}

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the need for intensive breastfeeding intervention and antenatal counseling programs especially for the women visited the hospital during their antenatal and postnatal check-ups. The counseling should be continued after the delivery of baby for continuous education to mother about the proper care of newborn, initiation of breastfeeding, the information regarding the advantages and duration of breastfeeding, importance of colostrums feeding, timing of weaning needs to be provided.

The staff of healthcare facility should ensure education of the mothers regarding exclusive breastfeeding and proper weaning of baby before discharge from the healthcare facility. In India, the ANMs, ASHA worker and anganwadi worker can utilize the Village Health and Nutrition Day for giving health education of future mothers and support for breastfeeding mothers.

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