

Knowledge, Attitude and Awareness of Nursing Staff and Mothers Regarding Breastfeeding

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Abstract: Breastfeeding gives all neonates the best nutritional start in life. Successful breastfeeding depends, in part, on the support of the nursing staff caring for the breastfeeding. Although lactation is an automatic physiological process, breastfeeding is a learned behavior that is most successful in supportive environment. The present study was done to assess the knowledge, attitude and awareness of nursing staff and mothers regarding breastfeeding. The study was included of 38 nursing staff and 89 mothers of babies coming to the pediatric department of the Andaman and Nicobar Institute of Medical Sciences (ANIIMS) hospital. The study was done over a period of 8 months from Oct 2016 to June 2017. A specially prepared questionnaire was used for the study consisting of knowledge of breastfeeding, its importance, effect on baby's health, its nutrient value, etc. The scores of the participants were summated and analysis was done with the help of student's t test. It was found that the nursing staff was having more knowledge and awareness as compared to the mothers and the difference was significant statistically. But still it was lacking in certain areas and needs improvement. The knowledge and awareness of the nursing staff and mothers was needs to be improved.

Keywords: Breast feeding, nursing staff, Mothers.

INTRODUCTION

Adequate nutrition is critical to child health and development. The period from birth to two years of age is particularly important because of the rapid growth and brain development that occurs during this time [1].

Breastfeeding is the biological norm for infant feeding and nutrition. It has been well documented that human milk is the preferred food for all infants, including premature and sick newborns[2].

The sick infant or young child needs the natural biological components of breastmilk, not only for nutrition and immunological protection, but because breastmilk reduces the severity of illness[3]. Traditionally, it has been the role of obstetrical nurses to support mothers' initiation of breastfeeding. However, with early discharge from the hospital, many infants are admitted to pediatric facilities within the first two to four weeks of life with problems, such as dehydration, excessive weight loss, failure to thrive, or hyperbilirubinemia. Frequently, these admissions are a direct result of a mother not fully understanding the importance of breastfeed her infant[2].

The present study was done to assess the knowledge, attitude and awareness of nursing staff and mothers regarding breastfeeding.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was included of 38 nursing staff and 89 mothers of babies coming to the pediatric department of the Andaman and Nicobar Institute of Medical Sciences (ANIIMS) hospital. The study was done over a period of 8 months from Oct 2016 to June 2017. A specially prepared 15 questionnaire was used for the study consisting of knowledge of breastfeeding, its importance, effect on baby's health, its nutrient value, etc. Approval of the ethical committee was taken before start of the study and informed consent was also taken from all the participants.

The questionnaire was of Yes or No answer type and each correct answer was given score 1, while wrong answer was given score zero. The questionnaire were given to all the nursing staff on one day and their responses was collected, while the questionnaire was given to the mothers when they come and their responses were collected. The scores of the participants were summated and analysis was done with the help of student's t test.

RESULTS

Total 38 nursing staff and 89 mothers participated in the present study. It was found that the nursing staff was having more knowledge and

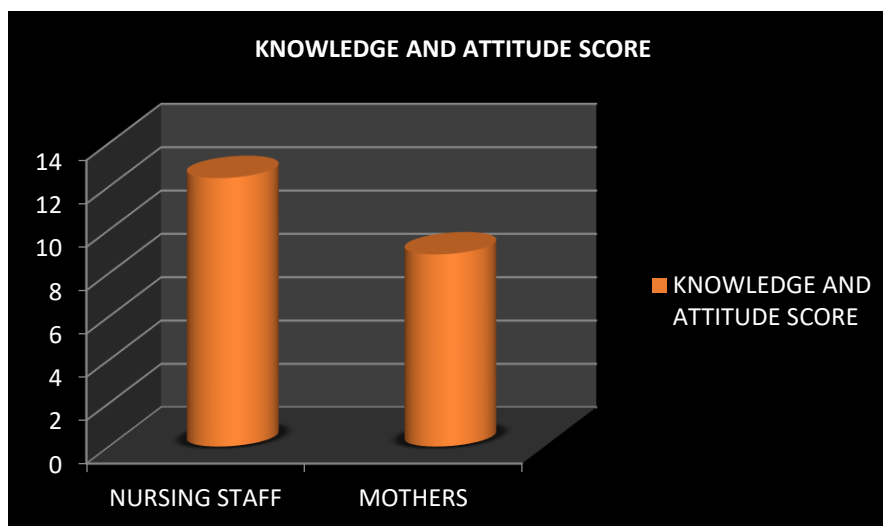
awareness as compared to the mothers and the difference was significant statistically. (Student’s t test, $p < 0.01$) (Table 1 and Graph 1) Though the nursing staff had more knowledge, but it was still not sufficient.

Table-1: Comparison of the scores of the nursing staff and the mothers about the knowledge and awareness of the breastfeeding

Group	Number of participants	Mean ± SD	T value	P value
Nursing staff	38	12.39 ± 2.4647	8.3647	<0.01*
Mothers	89	8.87 ± 4.3738		

SD = Standard deviation.

*Statistically highly significant.



Graph-1: Comparison of the scores of the nursing staff and the mothers about the knowledge and awareness of the breastfeeding

DISCUSSION

“Breast is best” is a common phrase that summarizes general opinions about breast milk in comparison to any other form of feed available for infants [4]. Nursing staff are the key functionary operating at the most peripheral level in the hospitals. Her work also includes health and nutrition education on various aspects of mother and child health[5].

The key to successful breastfeeding is Information, Education and Communication strategies aimed at behavior change. For such a promotional campaign to be effective, attitudes and practices of health providers must be improved. Exclusive breastfeeding stands out as the single most effective intervention for child survival. Universalizing early (within one hour) and exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, is viewed as a major public health intervention to reduce the child mortality, particularly, in the neonates and infants[6].

The period is often marked by growth faltering, micronutrient deficiencies, and common childhood illnesses such as diarrhea and Acute Respiratory Infections, as children transition from exclusive breastfeeding to solid foods in addition to breast milk. Breast milk provides immunologic

protection against death from infectious diseases, such as diarrhea, respiratory infections, otitis media[1].

Infant feeding practices are constantly changing in our community, mothers are the first care giver and breast feeding is the natural infant feeding and the best method for increasing survival and decreasing death in newborns in addition, little is known about breastfeeding[1].

Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life improves the growth, health and survival status of newborns and is one of the most natural and best forms of preventive medicine. Exclusive breastfeeding plays a pivotal role in determining the optimal health and development of infants, and is associated with a decreased risk for many early-life diseases and conditions, including otitis media, respiratory tract infection, diarrhea and early childhood obesity[6].

Bademosi asserted that breastfeeding was the traditional African feeding practice and that the influences of various forms of civilization have impacted negatively on this practice. She further affirmed that research has disproved the general belief

that breast-milk substitutes are as good as breast milk[4].

Results of the present study reveal that mothers have deficient knowledge concerning breastfeeding initiation, benefits of colostrums and milk extraction. While have efficient knowledge regarding exclusivity of breastfeeding and duration of breastfeeding. The present study had also shown that the nursing staff had more knowledge than mothers.

There is also evidence that epidemiological studies support the association between breastfeeding and reduced infant morbidity and mortality in both developing and industrialized nations. It has been noted that breastfeeding confers the greatest protection against infection when it is exclusive and continuous for at least four to six months[4].

The decision to breastfeed is complex and it depends on multiple factors, namely demographical, biological, psychological, social and educational. The physical challenges inherent to the process of breastfeeding, such as pain, discomfort and disturbance caused by fissures, breast engorgement and even mastitis, contribute significantly to the abandonment of breastfeeding. The psychological factors, namely maternal intent, interest and confidence are crucial in the decision to breastfeed[7].

CONCLUSION

The knowledge and awareness of the nursing staff and mothers therefore it needs to be improved by organizing awareness programs, workshops or information pamphlets.

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