

Adherence to the recommendation of exclusive breast feeding by mothers attending immunization clinics at the Lady Ridgeway Hospital

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Introduction

Breast milk is the best diet for human babies. World Health Organization has recommended exclusive breast feeding up to 6 months in order to achieve optimal growth, development and health of the child. Available data suggests that urbanization and increasing economic demands can adversely affect exclusive breast feeding.

Objectives

To identify the pattern of breast feeding in the first 6 months and factors affecting the non-compliance with the recommendation of exclusive breast feeding.

Methods

A descriptive cross sectional study was carried out on mothers having infants between 4-6 months of age who are attending the immunization clinic at Lady Ridgeway Hospital. Mothers were chosen for the study using systematic sampling. Only those who fulfilled the inclusion criteria were included in the study. Informed verbal consent was obtained. The study instruments included an interviewer administered questionnaire and record sheet. The data obtained was analysed using SPSS 17.0 software.

Results

The overall prevalence of exclusive breast feeding in our study population was 66%. The most commonly given supplement was water, and the most common reason for giving supplements was the feeling of inadequate breast milk. There was a statistically significant positive association between exclusive breast feeding and mother being a housewife, living in a nuclear family, and having exclusively breast fed a previous child for 6 months ($p < 0.05$). There was a statistically significant negative association between exclusive breast feeding and grandmother taking care of the child at home and practicing expression of breast milk ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion

The study showed that a significant proportion of mothers do not practice exclusive breast feeding. Working mothers and mothers living in extended families were more likely to introduce supplements before six months.