

Short Communication

## Knowledge of the Staff Nurses about IYCF in Two Districts of Northern India

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### ABSTRACT

**INTRODUCTION:** Breastfeeding promotion is a significant child survival strategy. Interventions to improve early and correct infant feeding practices can result in considerable reduction in neonatal morbidity and mortality. It is important for staff nurses to have adequate knowledge about breastfeeding and skills to counsel mother and family members. The objective of the present study was to assess the knowledge and counseling skills of the staff nurses, positioned at L1-L2 delivery points, with regard to IYCF.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS:** A Labor Room Assessment was conducted by Department of Community Medicine, K.G.M.U, Lucknow for strengthening of labor rooms of different levels in districts of Badaun and Saunbhadra. An IYCF checklist based on WHO and IMNCI guidelines was prepared and 22 staff nurses of level 2 delivery points (5 from 24\*7 PHC and 14 from CHC of Badaun, 2 from 24\*7 PHC and 1 from CHC of Saunbhadra) were interviewed about their knowledge and counseling skills regarding IYCF.

**RESULTS:** Only two-third (63.6%) had knowledge about initiation of breast feeding within 1hour. High knowledge was seen for benefits of colostrums where all the staff nurses (100%) knew that colostrums are rich in antibodies and vitamins. Regarding counseling skills, all the 22 nurses reminded mothers about the benefits of exclusive breast feeding for 6 months and dangers of artificial feeding and water.

**KEY WORDS:** Breast Feeding, IYCF, Staff Nurses, Knowledge

### INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding promotion is a significant child survival strategy. Interventions to improve early and correct infant feeding practices can result in considerable reduction in neonatal morbidity and mortality. [1] The beneficial effects of breast feeding depend on breast feeding initiation, its duration and the age at which complimentary feeding was started. [2]

To achieve optimal growth and development, WHO guidelines under IYCF recommend that infants should be exclusively breast fed for the first six

months of life. Thereafter, to meet their nutritional requirements, infant should receive adequate and safe complementary foods while breastfeeding continues up to two years of age and beyond. [2] Staff nurses of any delivery point are the key personnel in educating mothers regarding breast feeding initiation immediately after the birth. Therefore, it is important for staff nurses to have adequate knowledge about breastfeeding and skills to counsel mother and family members. The objective of the present study was to assess the knowledge and counseling skills of the staff nurses,

positioned at L1-L2 delivery points, with regard to IYCF.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A Labor Room Assessment was conducted by Department of Community Medicine, K.G.M.U, Lucknow for strengthening of labor rooms of different levels in districts of Badaun and Saunbhadra. An IYCF checklist based on WHO and IMNCI guidelines was prepared and 22 staff nurses of level 2 delivery points (5 from 24\*7 PHC and 14 from CHC of Badaun, 2 from 24\*7 PHC and 1 from CHC of Saunbhadra) were interviewed about their knowledge and counselling skills regarding IYCF. Level 1 delivery point is a network of other PHC's/subcentres/" delivery points" linked to 24\*7 PHC's/FRU's through assured referral system while Level 2 is a network of 24\*7 PHC's or CHC providing basic emergency obstetric care (BEmOC).

The IYCF checklist consisted of 8 multiple choice questions to assess their knowledge on IYCF and 6 parameters to assess their counseling skills. Correct responses to test items in the knowledge questionnaire were given 1 mark with a max of 8 marks and all those parameters for which they counselled correctly were also given 1 mark with a max of 6 marks. Based on their score of knowledge and counseling skills, their IYCF training status was assessed (0-untrained, 1-trained).

The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 16 version was used for statistical purposes.

## **RESULTS**

Only two-third (63.6%) had knowledge about initiation of breast feeding within 1 hour. High knowledge was seen for benefits of colostrums where all the staff nurses (100%) knew that colostrums is rich in antibodies and vitamins. Approximately 55% knew that nipple and maximum areola should be in baby's mouth during breast feeding.

Majority of them (86.4%) had knowledge on ways to recognize that breast

feeding is adequate for the baby, which they answered it as, urine output and weight gain. Low knowledge was seen for the question on hours for which breast milk can be kept at room temperature, in which less than half (45.5%) knew the correct answer. About half of them knew that critical window of opportunity is period between pregnancy and child's first two years of life and that home remedy for crack nipple is hind milk. 95.5% knew that 6-8 month baby should be given semisolid food (TABLE-1).

Regarding counseling skills, (TABLE-2) all the 22 nurses reminded mothers about the benefits of exclusive breast feeding for 6 months and dangers of artificial feeding and water. Majority of them assessed and counselled on position and attachment and listened to the mother's concerns carefully.

Approximately 82% staff nurses counselled mother on how to maintain good milk supply whereas less than two-third of them taught the mother how to correctly assess milk supply and how and why to express breast milk, which was less as compared to other parameters.

At the end, it was found that only 3 nurses were trained and had adequate knowledge.

## **DISCUSSION**

Under nutrition is a contributory factor in all deaths taking place in children under five years of age. One of the key reasons for under nutrition in early life is the faulty and sub-optimal infant and young child feeding practices (1). Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) is a global strategy which was issued jointly by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2002, to reverse the disturbing trends in infant and young child feeding practices. Nutritional counseling of mothers of children aged 0 - 2 years, by AWWs, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives, nursing staff or supervisors, is effective in positive behavioural modification and should be actively incorporated and emphasized.

Early initiation of breastfeeding, which should be within 1 hour of birth, is an indispensable component of IYCF and the present study demonstrates that approximately two-third of the staff nurses had this knowledge. Similar study was conducted by *Taksande et al* in which knowledge about early initiation of breastfeeding was found low among the Anganwadi Supervisors. [1] *Dorle et al* has also conducted a similar study among 76 Anganwadi Workers of Bagalkot where only 16 of them knew the correct time of initiation of breast feeding after normal delivery and caesarean section. [2]

Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and timely introduction of complementary foods (solid, semisolid or soft foods) after the age of six months is also essential components of IYCF, and in our study, all the staff nurses counselled the mothers regarding this parameter which is similar to a study conducted by *Saxena et al*, where adequate knowledge about correct breast feeding practices was seen among 98% ASHA workers of Dehradun district. [3] However, in a study conducted by *Kakrani et al* among the medical and nursing students of one of the medical colleges of Pune, the knowledge of informing pregnant women about benefits and management of breast feeding was found to be low. [4]

A knowledge-counselling skill mismatch has been observed in the present study in relation to expressed breast milk, where less than half of the staff nurses knew the correct hours for which breast milk can be used at normal temperature against the 63.6% staff nurses teaching mother how and why to express breast milk.

Breastfeeding practices as a part of child rearing are largely determined by the

community norms and beliefs which are very intricately woven, and are resistant to change by mere sharing of information. It necessitates a well-planned and consistent behavior change communication strategy to overcome this barrier.

TABLE-1 KNOWLEDGE OF STAFF NURSES Parameters related to breast feeding (n)=22

PARAMETERS	Number (n=22)	%age
Early initiation of breastfeeding implies		
a) initiation within 24hrs of birth	3	13.6
b) initiation within 1 hr of birth	14	63.6
c) initiation as and when baby wants	5	22.7
Benefits of colostrum's feeding		
a) helps in early passing of stool and prevent jaundice	16	72.7
b) rich in antibodies and vitamins	22	100
c) enhance the immunity	16	72.7
Part of breast that should be in baby's mouth while breastfeeding		
a) only nipple	0	0
b) nipple and a small part of areola	7	31.8
c) nipple and maximum possible areola	12	54.5
d) nipple and any extent of areola	3	13.6
Ways to recognize that breastfeeding is adequate for baby		
a) urine output and weight gain	19	86.4
b) stool	0	0
c) crying	3	13.6
d) by abdominal fullness	0	0
Hours for which breast milk can be used at normal temperature		
a) 2-3hrs	10	45.5
b) 6-7hrs	11	50
c) 12hrs	1	4.5
d) 24hrs	0	0
Home remedy for crack nipple		
a) antibiotics	3	13.6
b) ointments	4	18.2
c) hindmilk	11	50
d) coconut oil	4	18.2
Food consistency for 6-8mth baby		
a) mashed	13	59.1
b) watery	12	54.5
c) semi solid	21	95.5
Critical window of opportunity in relation to child and nutrition		
a) period between pregnancy and child's first two years	11	50
b) third trimester of pregnancy	3	13.6
c) first 28 days of newborn	3	13.6
d) first 24hrs after delivery	5	22.7

TABLE 2:- COUNSELLING SKILLS OF STAFF NURSES Parameters for assessing counseling skills (n) =22

PARAMETERS	Number (n=22)	%age
Reminds mother about benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for 6 month and dangers of artificial feeding and water	22	100
Assesses and counsels on position and attachment	19	86.4
Reminds mother how to correctly assess milk supply by seeing urine output and weight gain	13	59.1
Counsels mother on how to maintain good milk supply by feeding on demand and good attachment during breast feeding	18	81.8
Teaches mother how and why to express breast milk	14	63.6
Listens carefully to mothers concerns regarding breastfeeding	19	86.4

## **CONCLUSION**

In our study, after assessing the knowledge and counseling skills of the staff nurses, it is concluded that the IYCF training status is inadequate and there is need for in-service training of supervisor, other health workers/personnel, for updating their knowledge.

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