

A STUDY OF BREAST FEEDING PRACTICES IN URBAN SLUMS

MRS. PUSHPA M DURGE ● V.R. DANGE ● A.P. THOMAS
D.M. THORAT ● MRS. R.L. DESAI

SUMMARY

100% of mothers have breast fed their infants. 83.59% have fed colostrum. A significant association was observed between colostrum feeding and type of family. 75.78% of mothers fed prelacteals. Out of these, 85.15% of mothers were following near exclusive breast feeding up to 4-6 months, indicating high sustainability of breast feeding practice. 95% of mothers were aware of time of weaning but only 50% had correct knowledge of weaning foods. Most of the mothers were to feed their babies for at least one and half year. 48.43% had knowledge about effect of breast feeding as birth control measure.

INTRODUCTION

Human breast milk, nature's perfect gift, is vastly superior to anything available from most sophisticated technologies. Breast feeding is the most effective way to provide baby with complete food and protection with a caring environment. It is regarded as a first immunization by pediatrician and due to Oxitocin reflex it

is also regarded as fourth stage of labour by obstetricians. (WHO 1990)

In many societies it is a tradition not to put the infant to the breast for few days and discard colostrum. A delay in breast feeding may lead to hypoglycemia, hypothermia and acidosis especially among high risk low birth infants. (Singhania et al 1990).

With the introduction of modern technologies and adoption of new life style there is a negative effect on breast feeding

*Dept of Preven. & Social Medicine Indira Gandhi
Medical College, Nagpur.*

Accepted for Publication on 1.5.96

practices. Abandonment of breast feeding is a significant factor in death of around 3,000 to 4,000 infants every day due to diarrhoea and respiratory infections (UNICEF 1990). There is a reawakening about importance of breast feeding with the baby friendly care, there is a new approach to breast feeding for mothers and new born. Impact of all these aspects are studied on breast feeding practices of mothers belonging to urban slums.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1) To study the breast feeding and complementary feeding practices.
- 2) To study sustainability of breast feeding at 4-6 months.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

A cross-sectional study was carried out on 128 mothers attending the immunization clinic having infants upto one year, run by urban health centre, Dept. of Preventive and Social Medicine, Indira Gandhi Medical College, Nagpur. A pretested proforma was filled by interviewing mothers. Interview-

ers were trained in workshop on breast feeding at Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital. The data was collected on feeding practices, i.e. feeding of prelactals, colostrum, exclusive breast feeding and complementary feeding.

OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION

Out of 128 mothers, 90% of mothers belonged to 20 -30 years of age group. 63.3% of mothers had secondary education while 16.3% of mothers had higher education. As per the socio-economic status they belonged to upper lower and lower middle income group. 44.54% and 55.46% of mothers belonged to nuclear and joint family respectively.

COLOSTRUM FEEDING

83.59% of mothers have fed colostrum to the infants. This data was further analysed to find out the association between type of family and parity. More mothers belonging to nuclear family follow the practice of feeding colostrum. There is a significant statistical association ($X^2 = 5.16$ D.F. 1P <0.05) indicating that if there is no in-

Table I
SHOWING ASSOCIATION OF COLOSTRUM FEEDING
AND TYPE OF FAMILY

Type of family	Colostrum Feeding		Total
	Yes	No	
Joint family	54	17	71
Nuclear family	52	05	57
Total	106	22	128

($X^2 = 5.16$ D.F. - 1 $p < 0.05$)

fluence of elders mothers accept the advice of health providers. However, no significant association was observed between parity and colostrum feeding.

PRELACTEALS

75.78% of mothers have fed prelacteals. Out of this 84.53% of mothers have observed this practice as a ritual, in the form of non milk products. 9.27% of mothers have given milk. It is a common misbelief that there is no milk secretion for the first two or three days. Prelacteal feed are potentially harmful because they may introduce infection or delay onset of lactation. (Bhargava et al 1990). In India more than 70% of mothers use prelacteals. Prelacteals were mainly fed with catori and spoon but few mothers (9.37%) have used bottles. This may lead to nipple confusion. (UNICEF 1990)

BREAST FEEDING

It was most heartening to note that 100%

of mothers breast fed their infants. This indicate that mothers still value the traditional practice of breast feeding. 85.15% of mothers were following near exclusive breast feeding upto four months i.e. used prelacteals as a ritual only. 12 mothers (11.95%) were following practice of exclusive breast feeding. This proves high sustainability of breast feeding practice. 14.88% of mothers were giving partial breast feeding. Low milk production was the major reason. However, whether it was true or perceived could not be ascertained. Breast and nipple problem was next cause. This is avoidable if breast and nipple examination is carried out during pregnancy and advised accordingly.

91.40% of mothers were demand feeding. Unrestricted feeding is necessary to satisfy the baby's need. 78.12% of mothers were feeding the baby for more than six times. Frequent feeding is necessary for

Table II
SHOWING FEEDING PRACTICES

Sr. No.	Feeding Practices	No.	%
1.	Ever breast fed	128	100
2.	Exclusive breast feeding up to 4-6 mnths	12	9.37
3.	Near exclusive breast feeding up to 4-6 mnths.	109	85.15
4.	Colostrum feeding	107	83.59
5.	Breast feeding within 2 hrs	37	28.70
6.	Breast feeding within 6 hrs	71	55.46
7.	Demand feeding	117	91.40
8.	Feeding of prelacteals	97	75.78
9.	Timely complementary feeding	122	95.31

adequate secretion of breast milk. (UNICEF 1990).

28.9% of mothers have fed their new borns within 2 hours and 55.46% of mothers within 6 hours. This assures adequate milk secretion. (UNICEF 1990). Bindeshwar et al (1995) has mentioned that 78% of mothers breast fed their babies within 12 hours.

COMPLEMENTARY FEEDING

95% of mothers were aware of time of weaning but only 50% of mothers had adequate knowledge about weaning foods. Similarly poor knowledge and practices were observed about frequency of feeding weaning foods according to age.

60% of the mothers had plan of breast feeding upto one and half year. 25.4% were willing to feed upto 2 years and more. Only 6.2% of mothers had stopped by 1 year.

CONTRACEPTIVE EFFECT

48.83% of mothers were aware of effect of breast feeding as a birth control measure. Exclusive breast feeding on demand and amenorrhoea gives atleast 98% protection for first six months. (UNICEF 1990, WHO 1990).

CONCLUSION

Breast feeding practices are satisfactory. However there is need to strengthen the knowledge about weaning feeds and overall weaning practices.

REFERENCES

1. Bhargava S.K. Singh K.K. Saxena B.N. I.C.M.R. New Delhi, 1990.
2. Bindeshwar Anthony M, De L. Castello Brit Med 310: 621; 1995.
3. Singhanian R.U., Kabra, S.K. Bansal A. Ind. Paediat. 27, 591, 1990.
4. UNICEF Training manual in breast feeding mangement : Steps towards baby freindly care, 1993.
5. WHO/UNICEF Breast feeding in 1990. Review and implication for global strategy June 1990.