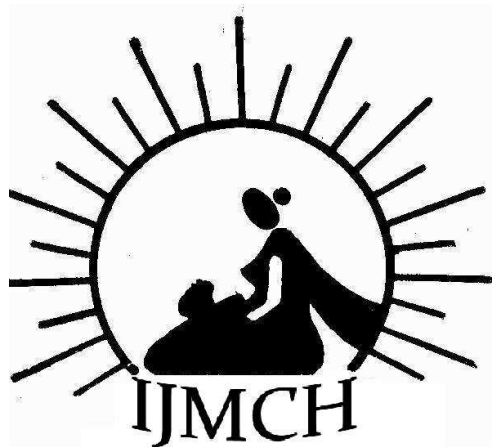


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*Tanu Midha
Nath B
Kumari R
Goyal P
Pandey U*

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To assess the breast feeding practices among mothers in rural Kanpur and to identify the factors associated with early initiation of breastfeeding.

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Tanu Midha,* Nath B,** Kumari R,** Goyal P,* Pandey U***

*Lecturer, Deptt. of Community Medicine, GSVM Medical College, Kanpur

**Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Community Medicine, Subharti Medical College, Meerut

***Lecturer, Deptt. of Cardiology, LPS Institute of Cardiology, Kanpur

Correspondence : Dr Tanu Midha

tanumidha2001@rediffmail.com

ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess the breast feeding practices among mothers in rural Kanpur and to identify the factors associated with early initiation of breastfeeding.

Settings and Design: A cross-sectional study conducted at the Primary Health Centre at block Patara in Kanpur district.

Material and Methods: Mothers of all children 6 to 24 months of age, attending the OPD of the Primary Health Centre at block Patara in Kanpur district from April 2008 to June 2008 were included in the study. Information was elicited using a pre-structured questionnaire.

Statistical Analysis: The statistical tools used for analysis were percentages and Pearson's Chi-square test.

Results: About 22.2% infants were initiated on breast feeding within 1 hour of birth. Mothers of 51.0% of infants exclusively breast fed their babies for 6 months. Approximately 72.7% infants were given pre-lacteals. Birth interval more than or equal to 3, male child and institutional delivery were factors leading to early initiation of breast feeding.

Keywords: *Breast feeding, practices, Kanpur.*

INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is the optimal form of infant nutrition (1). Breast milk fully meets the requirements of the infant in the first few months of life. It contains antimicrobial factors that provide protection against diarrhoeal diseases and respiratory infections. Early initiation of breast feeding is important as early breast milk contains all essential nutritive and immunological factors and ensures the development of oxytocin reflexes. The beneficial effects of breastfeeding depend on breastfeeding initiation, its duration, and the age at which the breast-fed child is weaned. Therefore the present study was undertaken to assess the breast feeding practices among mothers in rural Kanpur and to identify the determinants of early initiation of breastfeeding.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Rural Kanpur has a population of about 13 lakhs spread over 10 Community Development Blocks in the district. Out of the 10 blocks, one block was randomly selected. The study was carried out at the Block Primary Health Centre at block Patara. The study design was cross-sectional. All the mothers of children between 6 and 24 months attending the Out Patient Department and the Immunization Clinic at the Primary Health Centre from April 2008 to June 2008 were included in the study. Informed verbal consent was taken from each of the participants. A pre-tested structured questionnaire was used to elicit the information from the study participants. The questionnaire included socio-economic and demographic data, details on the initiation of breastfeeding and complementary feeding. For socio-economic status, Pareek scale of social classification was used and Classes I, II, and III were considered as upper class (2). The mother was asked to breast feed the child and the position of the mother and the attachment of the baby to the breast was observed and classified according to the criteria mentioned in the Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illnesses (IMNCI). (3)

RESULTS

Table I: Indicators of infant feeding practices

Indicator	Number (N=194)	Percentage
% of infants who were initiated on breast feeding within 1 hour of birth	42	21.6
% of infants who were exclusively breast fed for 6 months	99	51.0
% of infants who were given pre-lacteals	141	72.7
% of infants who were breast fed in correct position	73	37.6
% of infants who showed good attachment to the breast	79	40.7
% of children age 6-9 months receiving solid or semi-solid food and breast milk	88	45.3

A total of 194 mothers were interviewed regarding their practices of breastfeeding of their infants. Of the total study sample, 104 (53.6%) mothers were less than 30 years of age and 91 (46.9%) were in the upper social class.

21.6% infants were initiated on breast feeding within 1 hour of birth. Mothers of 51.0% of infants exclusively breast fed their babies for 6 months. 72.7% infants were given pre-lacteals, such as honey, ghutti or water.

Table II: Factors associated with initiation of breast-feeding within 1 hour of birth

Factor	No. of infants who were initiated on BF <1 hr(N=42)	% of infants who were initiated on BF <1 hr	No. of infants who were not initiated on BF <1 hr(N=152)	% of infants who were not initiated on BF <1 hr.	Total	OR	p-value
Age of the Mother							
<30 years	26	25	78	75	104	1.54	0.22
>30 years	16	17.8	74	82.2	90		
Sex of the child							
Male	31	31.6	67	68.4	98	3.57	<0.01*
Female	11	11.5	85	88.5	96		
Birth order**							
≤2	27	24.8	82	75.2	109	0.68	0.36
>2	12	32.4	25	67.6	37		
Birth Interval							
<3 years	15	15.6	81	84.4	96	2.05	0.04*
≥3 years	27	27.6	71	72.4	98		
Socio-economic Class							
Upper class	24	26.4	67	73.6	91	1.69	0.13
Lower class	18	17.5	85	82.5	103		
Type of delivery							
Institutional	26	36.6	45	63.4	71	3.86	<0.01*
Home delivery	16	13	107	87	123		

* *p-value < 0.05 is significant*

** *N=146 as first order births have been excluded.*

Birth interval more than or equal to 3 (OR=2.05), male child (OR=3.57) and institutional delivery (OR=3.86) were factors responsible for early initiation of breast feeding.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, 21.6% mothers initiated their child on breast feeding within one hour of birth whereas this figure is around 21.5% in rural India and 6.9% in rural Uttar Pradesh (4,5). This may be because it is a facility based study and the mothers attending a facility are more likely to be aware of the right time of initiation of breastfeeding. In our study, around 51.0% of the mothers exclusively breastfed their child up to the age of 6 months, which compares well with 55.8% in rural Uttar Pradesh and 48.3% in rural India (4,5). Children age 6-9 months receiving solid or semi-solid food and breast milk were 45.3% in our study which is slightly more than 44.3% in rural Uttar Pradesh and less than 53.8% in rural India (4,5).

Amongst the mothers in Karnataka only 19% used pre lacteal feeds whereas in our study 72.9% of the mothers gave prelacteal feeds to their child (6). The discrepancy may be attributed to a difference in the religious and cultural practices in these communities. In our study, good attachment was seen in 40.7% mother–infant pairs and 37.6% of the mothers breast fed their child in the correct position. Another study from Haryana reported ‘good attachment’ in 42% mother–infant pairs and infants were held in ‘correct position’ by 60% mothers. (7)

In the present study, birth interval more than or equal to 3 and institutional delivery were the important determinants of early initiation of breast feeding. This finding may be useful for health planners to design educational programs for spacing of pregnancies and to promote institutional deliveries as a measure to decrease child mortality.

CONCLUSION

Promotion of institutional deliveries and advocacy of birth spacing will bring about early initiation of breast feeding and thereby improve the health and nutritional status of rural children.

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