

Knowledge of Anganwadi Workers About Breastfeeding

In India, increasing number of mothers are turning to bottlefeeding(1). Anganwadi workers (AWW) are the first level health workers responsible for promotion of maternity and child health care. A study was planned to assess the knowledge and attitude of these AWWs towards breastfeeding.

One hundred and thirty AWW were selected at random from three adjacent districts of Orissa. They answered a set of pre-designed questions related to breastfeeding. These questions covered areas like initiation, continuation, benefits and cost, reasons of failure and attitude of AWWs towards breastfeeding. The answers were evaluated from 20 marks, each question carrying one mark. Of the 130 AWW, 25 (20%) secured more than 15 marks, 96 (74%) secured between 10 to 15 marks, and 9 (6%) secured less than 10 marks. This showed that the average knowledge of AWW was adequate.

Out of 4 marks per each aspect of breastfeeding, the mean score was low in reasons of feeding failure (2.3 out of 4) and individual attitude and practice (1.7 out of 4). The scores in the areas of initiation (2.8), continuation (2.2) and benefits

to mother and baby (3.2) were relatively high. The need for antenatal maternal education for breastfeeding was felt by 103 (79.2%) AWWs. The common causes of breastfeeding failure were maternal sickness (33%), not enough milk (24%), working mothers, cosmetic cause and indigestion. Hospitals and health workers were the main source of information on use of top milk (69%).

The individual attitude and practice of AWW determines the effectiveness of health education to the community. Earlier studies(2,3) have reported that motivated and trained health workers favorably influence breastfeeding practices in the community. In conclusion, the AWWs have less information about the causes of breastfeeding failure and their attitude showed a low score towards breastfeeding practices.

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