

clearly written in the last paragraph under subjects and methods(7).

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The Attitude of Nurses Towards Breastfeeding - A Cross-sectional Survey

The areas of greatest resistance to promote breastfeeding is from health professionals and this should take precedence over public awareness programs(1). It is still a challenge for pediatricians to achieve the goal of exclusive breastfeeding by enabling health workers to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to help mothers to successfully breastfeed their babies(2).

In this study, 322 nurses were interviewed about their knowledge and attitudes towards breastfeeding. The sample comprised of student nurses (25.7%), private hospital nurses (30.12%), government dispensary nurses

(8.03%), government hospital nurses (12.7%) and nurses of government peripheral health centers (23.29%).

On analysis, the following salient observations emerged. Only 50% of the nurses felt that breastfeeding should be initiated soon after birth. The importance of colostrum was known to 82.6% of the nurses, as has been noted in previous studies also(3,4). Only a small percentage (26%) of the nurses felt that rooming in of the baby with the mother was a beneficial practice. As regards the problems associated with breastfeeding, 76% of the nurses interviewed felt that mothers should stop breastfeeding on developing a nipple crack or fissure. The concept of demand feeding was known to only half the interviewed nurses. The article brings about another observation of breastfeeding. 23.2% of the nurses felt that breastfeeding should be stopped during diarrhea.

Regarding age of continuation of breastfeeding, only 25.4% of the nurses felt that it should be continued upto 2 years of age and the majority felt that breastfeeding should be stopped by 1 year of age.

Even though worldwide promotion of breastfeeding has been recommended and various steps for promoting this objective have been undertaken, the results are still far from satisfactory(5). Support from nurses can influence breastfeeding rate, but many nurses are not well informed about breastfeeding topics(6). Most students attend breastfeeding lectures, but few receive breastfeeding information during clinical activities. Nursing education may not prepare students for effective breastfeeding promotion.

Efforts should be made to incorporate infant feeding concepts in the formal educational curriculum so that girls grow up with a positive attitude towards infant feeding(7). Health care providers must take an active role in providing services to lactating women. A nurse managed hospital based breastfeeding program that provides continuity of care and supportive services from the hospital to the community for lactating women is desirable(8).

The critical role health workers play in protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding should be seen in the context of their broad social commitment. They should lead in preserving or reestablishing a breastfeeding culture by promoting a positive attitude towards breastfeeding in society.

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