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Suthi Feeding: An Experience

Man discovered bottle feeding as an alternative method, in situations where breastfeeding cannot be given. With increase in use of "bottle", more and more hazards of bottle feeding were recognized. The campaign against bottle feeding was started. A concept of "Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative" has grown to promote, protect and support breastfeeding. However, a suitable alternative method of feeding in cases where expressed breastmilk is given or breastfeeding cannot be given at all, is still in question. Feeding with "spoon and bowl" (Katori-chammach) was considered to be a reasonable alternative as better cleanliness can be achieved.

In Nursery setting, particularly in our circumstances, where sufficient staff is lacking, it appears to be impractical to some extent to feed every neonate with "spoon and bowl", considering the time it consumes. For this reason other utensils were also evaluated and "Suthi" (Fig. 1) was considered a better alternative.

Suthi is a traditional "Sindhi" utensil

made of silver and presented by maternal grandparents to the child for drinking water. This vessel made up of stainless steel is also available and costs Rs. 7 to 10. It is a small semicircular vessel measuring 10 or 20 cc with a long semicircular beak having curved rounded margins. Salient features and advantages of Suthi feeding are: (i) It is a shallow vessel with a broad upper surface, so that it can be cleaned thoroughly and easily, thus preventing all the hazards of a deep vessel like bottle; (ii) Its narrow beak can be put directly into the mouth of neonate especially prematures and low birth weight babies with relative



Fig. 1. Photograph of Suthi

ease as compared to spoon, thus helping in less spill over of milk; (iii) The total procedure of feeding with Suthi is less messy. The amount of milk per feed especially for prematures, can easily be quantified as full Suthi measures 10 or 20 cc and other measuring cylinder or vessel is not required. Further, the process of feeding with Suthi is faster.

In our experience, the time taken for average feeding by "Suthi" is 7-10 min compared to 15-20 min by spoon. Moreover, the entire process of feeding is easier from rounded beak of Suthi. On an average day, the nursery has 15-20 neonates and at least 10 babies are on oral feed. The time consumed prior to use of Suthi in neonatal ward was minimum 3 hours per feed for these 8-10 babies,

which is now reduced to 1/3rd by Suthi feeding.

We believe that in home setting also, promotion of Suthi feeding will be advantageous. Because of the architecture, parents will not give the feed to child while in lying down posture, thereby reducing chances of aspiration. "Suthi", being a traditional vessel, may easily be accepted by the community. Thus, whenever situation warrants, we strongly advocate use of Suthi instead of bottle.

**B.D. Gupta,
Pradeep Jain,
S.L. Mandowara,**

*Department of Pediatrics,
Regional Institute of Maternal and
Child Health, Umaid Hospital, Jodhpur.*