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## Maternal Knowledge of Childhood Immunization

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Childhood immunizations are a cost effective large scale method of protecting children's lives. Mothers are the key figure

of support around their children and are thus the most effective primary health care workers for the children. Any successful breakthrough in the child health must necessarily centre on the mother(1). A substantial proportion of mothers have been found to be unaware of the protective values of immunization(2-4). This study was undertaken to evaluate the mothers' knowledge of immunization in an Urban Medical College Hospital.

This study was conducted in the Department of Pediatrics, Medical College, Baroda between January and May, 1990. Three hundred and four mothers of children aged 6 months to 5 years attending Pediatric OPD and indoors were the subject of the study. The mothers were explained the purpose of the study by a Pediatrician and interviewed about their knowledge and awareness of immunization in childhood. Their responses were recorded on a pretested semistructured proforma. Statistical analysis was performed by the Chi square test.

### Results

Of the 304 mothers, 218 (71.6%) were aware of the need and availability of immunization, while the remaining 86 (28.4%) mothers had no knowledge about immunization. The mean age of mothers was 23.5 years. Of the 218 mothers, 44 (20.1%) were uneducated while 174 were educated (107 had education up to middle, 40 up to higher secondary and 18 were graduates

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and/or post graduates). A statistically significant difference was observed in the knowledge of various factors regarding immunization between the uneducated and educated mothers (Table).

The benefits of immunization as cited by mothers included prevention of disease, prevention of disability, improvement in health by 77.4, 32.3 and 10.2% mothers, respectively. No significant difference was observed in knowledge of various factors of immunization with relation to the mother's age and the number of children. The source of information of immunization for mothers were health staff (doctors, nurses or anganwadi workers) in 50.2%, relatives and friends in 32.1%, TV and other mass media in 10.9% and magazines and posters in 6.8%.

### Discussion

A large number of mothers (28.4%) were not aware of the need and availability of immunization and other workers from

TABLE — Knowledge of Various Immunization Related Parameters (n = 218)

S. No.	Parameter	Educated (n=174)	Uneducated (n=44)	%
1.	Knowledge of names of vaccine needed in first year*	143	20	74.7
2.	Correct number of doses of DPT*	134	17	69.2
3.	Benefits of immunization*	152	16	77.1
4.	Mild illness is not contraindication for immunization*	81	5	39.4

\*  $p < 0.001$ ;

Per cents are out of the total (n = 218)

India have also reported the lack of awareness of immunization amongst mothers(2-4). The significant difference observed by us in various factors of immunization between educated and uneducated mothers highlights the importance of maternal literacy which empowers a woman with access to information and to take decisions in child care practices(1). The educational status of the mothers has a great bearing on the immunization status of the child(2,5).

There is also a need to emphasize and educate mothers through health workers and media that mild illness is not a contraindication to the routine immunizations(6). It is important to stress to the mothers about this aspect, so that they do not delay or postpone the immunizations and return on schedule. Although the mass media, e.g., television has been propagating the message of immunization, a relatively small group(10.9%) has been observed by us and other workers(2,4) to have actually gained information from this source. Mass media has a vital role to play in childhood immunization and perhaps the message may be better delivered if telecast more frequently every day and at prime viewing times(2).

In order to make mothers aware of the benefits of immunization, adequate emphasis needs to be placed upon their health education. Antenatal health education of mothers during pregnancy, providing economically and culturally acceptable methods like street shows and songs and inclusion of health education in school curriculum are some of the suggested ways to improve the knowledge of women regarding immunization(2,4,6). Such educative and communication methods can effectively change immunization messages into better immunization practices.

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NOTES AND NEWS

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**WORKSHOP ON GROWTH MONITORING AND NUTRITION SURVEILLANCE**

A Workshop on 'Growth Monitoring and Nutrition Surveillance Problem' will be organized by the Growth and Development Chapter and Nutrition Chapter of IAP Sub-speciality on *17th January, 1993* during the XXX National Conference of IAP, Calcutta. The Registration Fee is Rs. 100/- which is to be paid by Demand Draft drawn on 'XXX National Conference of IAP, Calcutta' payable at Calcutta and to be sent to the Organizing Secretary at 9/1 Ramanath Pal Road, Calcutta 700 023.

For further details, please contact the following convenors for the Workshop.

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