Short Communication

Assessment of awareness and importance of breast feeding among pregnant and lactating women, Tabuk city, KSA in 2016

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: As stated by world health organization (WHO), Breastfeeding is the normal way of providing young infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. In this study we attempted to assess the awareness of the mothers about the benefits of breast feeding among pregnant and lactating women in Tabuk City, Saudi Arabia. Methods: A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among 154 female during the period from April to July 2016. An online questionnaire was used to collect the knowledge and attitude toward breast feeding advantages and knowledge and attitude toward artificial feeding. Results: A total of 154 participants were enrolled in this study, 92.2% of participant breastfeed their infants for period ranging from 2 weeks to 2 years, the major reasons behind use of artificial feeding are mother’s job, low amount of breast milk, infants Refuse, and the breastfeed. Conclusion: Females in Tabok are well aware of the benefit breastfeeding for both infant and mother health.

Keywords: Breast feeding, pregnancy, Lactation, Tabuk, Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

As stated by world health organization (WHO), Breastfeeding is the normal way of providing young infants with the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development.

It was established that colostrum, the yellowish, sticky breast milk produced at the end of pregnancy, is recommended by WHO as the perfect food for the newborn, and feeding should be initiated within the first hour after birth.

Moreover, exclusive breastfeeding is recommended up to 6 months of age, and should be continued along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or beyond. (World health organization).

According to a cross-sectional study about perception and knowledge of breastfeeding among females in Saudi Arabia in 2013, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia they reported that saudian Females in Saudi Arabia are well aware that breast feeding is the best start for the newborn. Practical steps such as intensive education, support at postnatal period and longer maternity leave
are required to improve rates of exclusive breast feeding in the country. (AlFaleh, 2014)

Another cross-sectional study was carried out in Al-Hassa, Saudi Arabia in 2009, which reported that only 24.4% of all infants were exclusively breastfed to the age of 6 months. Exclusive breastfeeding is more likely to be reported by mothers of rural/ hegra residence, housewives, less educated mothers. (El-Gilany et al., 2011).

Also prevalence rates of timely initiated and exclusive breastfeeding were low in Taif, in 2013 as reported by cross-sectional study which was carried out in Taif, Saudi Arabia. (Laila et al., 2014).

Early breastfeeding initiation and breastfeeding exclusivity were determined by sociodemographic factors, especially educational and employment status. In such that: Educated, employed, and high-income mothers were less likely to initiate and maintain breastfeeding despite their relatively higher level of knowledge as stated by the cross-sectional descriptive study which was carried out in Al Hassa, KSA. (Amin et al., 2011).

A One more cross-sectional study was conducted at the International Medical Center, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2011 it was concluded that the results in the most commonly cited barriers to breastfeeding are approximately one-third of women included: lack of knowledge about breastfeeding, false impressions about inadequate quantities of breast milk produced by lactating women, and ease of use and liberal availability of formula within the community after birth. Surprisingly, more educated women and those with higher income prove to have less knowledge about breastfeeding. (Rafat et al., 2012).

A cross-sectional study conducted in 3 major hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in 2009, it was found that breastfeeding during the first few months of life was not optimal. The percentage of exclusive breastfeeding was low despite high level of their education. Mixed feeding was the predominant mode of feeding, which raised the need for targeted breastfeeding education. Health care providers should be encouraged to continuously educate women on the benefits of breastfeeding. (Alwelaie et al., 2010).

Out of our concern for the health of society and our knowledge of the benefits of breastfeeding and the enormous disadvantages of formula milk, we decided to go through this research and our goal is to assess the extent of knowledge of mothers on the importance of breastfeeding and the barriers they face in Tabuk, KSA.

Accordingly it is possible to introduce awareness programs designed to promote and encourage women to breastfeed their babies hoping to get to the highest levels of awareness and its significance.

**METHODOLOGY**

A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among 154 female (ether pregnant or lactating) in Tabuk City during the period from April to July 2016. An online questionnaire was used to collect the data on the knowledge about breast feeding advantages, to estimate the average period of breastfeeding among the participant and to know the reasons behind usage of artificial feeding, the questionnaire includes the socio-demographic data, data about awareness, knowledge, practice of breastfeeding and the attitude toward it.

**Statistical analysis**

The collected Data were entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) statistical program version 19.

**RESULTS**

In this study, the total number of participant are 154, participants age ranging from 20 years to 60 years, majority of participants (51.3%) aged from 31 years to 49
years, a (44.7%) of participants aged from 20 years to 30 years, and only (3.9%) of participants aged 50 years and above. Figure 1 above.

In our study, we found that (92.2%) of participants feed their infants with breast milk for a period ranging from 2 weeks to 2 years, and only (7.8%) participant use artificial feeding. Figure 2.

We found that the major reasons behind the use of artificial breastfeeding are mother’s preoccupation with her job (25.3%), low amount of breast milk (10.5%), infant refusal to be breastfed (10.3%) and the use of contraception. Figure 3.

Our aim is to assess mother’s knowledge about the benefits of breastfeeding, the major benefits indicated by the participants is that breast milk enhance infant immune system and prevent diseases (61%), enhance infants
growth (18.4%), prevent breast cancer in the mother (13.7%), and enhance relationship between infant and mother (7.2%). Regarding mother's knowledge about the benefits of artificial milk, 11 participants indicate that (there are no benefit), 14 participants indicated that (artificial feeding give more satiate) and 22 participants indicated that (It is more suitable for a mother outside the home), Figure 4 above.

93.5% of the participants indicated that they will continue breastfeeding in the future due to its high benefits while only 6.5% indicate that they will use artificial feeding. Figure 5.

CONCLUSION

Females in Tabok are well aware that breastfeeding is the best start for infants feeding. Steps such as education and support at postnatal period are required to improve rates of exclusive breastfeeding and to increase the period of breastfeeding.

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