KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE OF BREASTFEEDING IN RAWALPINDI: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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Introduction: Breastfeeding, as proved by studies conducted by UNICEF and Natural Resource Defense Council, is the natural way of providing immunity and healthy growth to infants. Despite of recommendation of exclusive breastfeeding for first 6 months by WHO, only 55% of newborns are exclusively breastfed during first 2 months of their lives and this drops to 37% among children of 6 months in Pakistan.

Objectives: To evaluate practice, knowledge and attitude to breastfeeding and to assess factors associated with breastfeeding among women.

Study design: Cross sectional descriptive study.

Place and Duration: Medical and Pediatric outpatient departments of Military Hospital, Combine Military Hospital, Holy Family Hospital, DHQ hospital, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Hospital, Rawalpindi from September 2012 to March 2013.

Subject and Method: A total of 700 (n=700) mothers, having children up to three years of age, presenting to OPD's of mentioned hospitals were subjected to pre tested structured questionnaire translated in urdu. Results were analyzed and compiled using SPSS21.

Results: Exclusive breastfeeding was reported by 49.14% (344), mixed feeding by 27 % (189) and infant formula feeding by 23.8 % (167) whereas 63 % gave pre-lacteal feed. Almost three fourth of the mothers breast fed for two years. 75.5% of the mothers were aware of the advantages of breastfeeding whereas among non-breast feeding mothers majority was of employed and those who had caesarian delivery.

Conclusion: High proportion of women did breastfeed up to two year whereas highly educated, working women and those who deliver by caesarean section as well as those with high socioeconomic status were less likely to breastfeed. Mother education and counseling along with providing facilitatory measures at hospitals and work place could encourage women to breastfeed.

Keywords: Colostrum, Exclusive breastfeeding, Pre-Lacteal feed.