

## Awareness of Antenatal Mother on Breast Feeding – Experience In A Tertiary Care Hospital of West Bengal.

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### Abstract:

**Introduction:** Appropriate breastfeeding practices for babies is essential for their optimal growth and development; reduction of child morbidity and mortality. But due to lack of awareness such an invaluable gift is still not being properly used by all.

**Objectives:** The study aiming at describing socio-demographic profile, assessing level of awareness and sources of information regarding breastfeeding among antenatal mothers.

**Methodology:** It was an observational descriptive cross-sectional study conducted at Antenatal Clinic of Medical College, Kolkata during February-March 2017. 349 antenatal mothers in third trimester were selected using systematic random sampling technique. Mothers were interviewed using a predesigned and pre-tested schedule, data was analysed in MS Excel in computer.

**Result:** Majority of mothers (84.82%) belong to age group 20-29 years, 52.15% live in urban area, 91.4% were literate. 86.53% were aware about some or other advantages of breast feeding; 52.01% know that breast feeding should be initiated within 1st hour or as soon as possible. 91.37% mothers were aware about exclusive breast feeding for at least 6 months after birth. 63.61% mothers received information on breastfeeding from family members.

**Conclusion:** Though majority of mothers were aware of correct breastfeeding practices, only a small portion of them still do not had proper information.

**Keywords:** Breast feeding, Awareness, Antenatal mother, West Bengal.

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### I. Introduction

Once Pamela K. Wiggins rightly said - "Breastfeeding is a mother's gift to herself, her baby and the earth." It has been universally established that appropriate breastfeeding practices reduce child morbidity and mortality; improve immunity in children besides being essential for their optimal growth and development. On the other hand, it decreases incidence of certain diseases like breast cancer in the mother. Ideally breast milk should be given to infants exclusively for 6 months and thereafter continued for at least 2 years with other food. But due to lack of awareness such an invaluable gift is still not being properly used by all. According to World children report 2011 by UNICEF, 136.7 million babies are born worldwide and only 32.6 % of them are breastfed exclusively during first six months of life.<sup>1</sup> Bangladesh demography and health survey (BDHS) reported exclusive breast feeding in Bangladesh is 64 % and early initiation is 43 %.<sup>2</sup> The Norwegian infant nutrition survey has shown breast feeding contribute to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health.<sup>3</sup> According to the Pan America Health Organisation Research, breast feeding can also reduce the risk of type 1 diabetes, childhood leukaemia and atopic dermatitis in babies, can also lower the risk of SIDS. Formula fed babies also have higher risk of necrotizing enterocolitis, lower respiratory tract infection, asthma and obesity.<sup>4</sup> Despite presence of several similar studies,<sup>(5, 6, 7)</sup> the current study was performed because Medical College, Kolkata is a tertiary health care setting where antenatal mothers visit from different parts of West Bengal and awareness level is dynamic. Hence, the present study was conducted to assess knowledge on breastfeeding among antenatal mothers of 3rd trimester attending at Antenatal OPD of Medical College & Hospital, Kolkata.

### II. Methodology

**Type of study:** It was an observational descriptive epidemiological study, cross-sectional in design.

**Place of study:** The study was conducted at Antenatal Clinic of Medical College, Kolkata.

**Period of study:** The study extended over one month from 23/02/2017 to 22/03/2017.

**Objectives:** The objectives of the study were to describe socio-demographic characters of antenatal mothers under study; to assess the level of awareness on breastfeeding among them and to find out the sources of information regarding breastfeeding among antenatal mothers under study.

**Population under study:** All the pregnant mothers in third trimester of pregnancy, attending at antenatal clinic of Medical College, Kolkata, during the period of study constituted the study population.

**Sampling:** Sample size was calculated using formula  $4pq/l^2$  ( $p$  - prevalence from a previous study,  $q = 100 - p$  and  $l$  - allowable error). Considering prevalence ( $p$ ) from a previous similar study<sup>5</sup> as 83% and  $l = 5\%$  of  $p$ , the sample size came as 328. Systematic random sampling method was used to choose 349 samples.

**Materials:** A pre-designed and pre-tested schedule was used as data collection tool.

**Method:** Data was collected by interviewing the mothers.

**Data analysis:** Collected data was entered, analysed and adorned with tables and diagram using MS Excel 2013 in computer.

### III. Result

The current study included 349 antenatal mothers in third trimester of pregnancy. 12(3.44%) mothers were teenager ( $\leq 19$  years) and the largest group (84.82%) had age 20-29 years. (Table 1) Among participants 167(47.85%) were rural resident and 182(52.15%) were from urban area; 179(51.29%) Hindu, 169(47.28%) were Muslim, 4(1.14%) were Christian and 1(0.29%) was Sikh; 143(40.97) from nuclear family and 206(59.03%) were from joint family. Among mothers, 30(8.60%) were illiterate, 42(12.03%) – just literate, 55(15.76%) – Primary educated, 143(40.97%) – Middle school educated, 52(14.90%) – Higher Secondary educated and 27(7.74%) were Graduate and above. Occupation-wise a large no. of mothers were homemaker (93.12%), 11(3.15%) were tailor, 3(0.86%) were teacher and maid servant each, 2(0.57%) were beautician, 1(0.29%) were in service, health worker, fruit seller, bidi maker and sweeper each. As per Modified B.G Prasad Scale (December 2016), 17(4.87%) mothers were in I (upper socio-economic class), 70(20.06%) in II (upper middle class), 105(30.09%) in III (middle class), 111(31.81%) in IV (lower middle class) and 46(13.18%) belonged to V (lower class).

Among the antenatal mothers under study, 185(53.01%) were carrying less than 37 weeks pregnancy and 164(46.99%) were with 37 or more weeks of gestation. 115(32.95%) mothers were primipara, 234(67.05%) were multipara among which 156(44.70%) had one child, 61(17.48%) had two children, 14(4.01%) had three children and 3(0.86%) had four children. Among expectant mothers under study, 302(86.53%) know some or other advantages of breast feeding like 222(63.61%) have knowledge that it is good for baby's health, 62(17.77%) know that breast milk protects baby from diseases and gives immunity, 39(11.17%) know that it provides good nutrition to baby. Less numbers of mothers know other advantages like breast milk is helpful for developing memory, better than other milk, protects from cough, cold and good for eyes. very few mothers (3.72%) know some disadvantages of breast feeding like it favours transmission of disease from mother to child and affects mothers health. (Table 2)

Except 1(0.29%), all antenatal mothers (99.71%) were willing to breast feed their babies. Among 348 mothers who want to feed their babies 181(51.86%) were aware of the ideal time for starting breast feeding, i.e., within 1 hour of birth; 294(84.24%) mothers has the awareness about colostrum feeding. Among 349 mothers, 310(89.11%) opined that no pre-lacteal feeding should be given to the new born, 36(10.32%) said it should be given and rests 2(0.57%) do not have knowledge about pre-lacteal feeding. Among 36 mothers who wanted to give their babies pre-lacteal feed, 22(61.11%) mother wanted to give honey, 8(22.22%) preferred sugar water, 6(16.67%) wanted canned food/ powered milk, 2(5.56%) wanted to give whole or diluted cow milk, 1(2.78%) preferred to give liquid food, prasadam or water each and 2(5.56%) did not have any specific choice of pre-lacteal food. 294(84.24%) mothers given opinion that colostrum should be given to the newborn. Among 348 mothers who wanted to breast feed their babies, 317(91.11%) wanted to offer breast milk exclusively, 30(8.6%) would give other feed in addition to breast milk and 1(0.29%) were uncertain about exclusive breast feeding. Among 30 mothers who wanted to give other food along with breast milk, 10(33.33%) preferred to give boiled food/ smashed rice/ rice-dal/ khichri, 7(23.33%) each wanted to give either cow milk or powered milk, 2(6.67) wanted to give water or other fluids, and 1(3.33%) each wanted to offer tinned food or honey. 1(3.33%) said that they will give additional food as per doctor's advice and another 1(3.33%) do not know what food to give. Regarding frequency of breast feeding, only 15(4.30%) mothers aware that demand feeding is essential, 289(82.81) have perception of fixed-time interval feeding and 44(12.89%) do not have any knowledge about frequency of feeding.

Among 348 mothers who were willing to give their babies breast milk, 316(90.80%) wanted to feed also at night, 27(7.76%). On enquiring 348 mothers to know their awareness level of perception regarding sufficiency of breast milk, 161(46.7%) know that baby stop crying, 121(34.67%) said that baby will stop feeding and turn mouth away from breast, 11(3.15%) had perception that baby will fall asleep, sleep peacefully and looks happy, 5(1.43%) said baby will pass adequate stool & urine, and other few mothers have perception

that baby will gain weight, by observing fullness of baby's belly etc. Among 348 mothers 274(78.80%) mothers wants to continue breast milk along with other food even after introduction of complementary feed. Among all 349 participant mothers 286(81.95%) received advice on breast feeding. Among those who received advice, 222(77.62%) had it from their family, 43(15.03%) from health centre/ hospital/ health workers/ nurse/ immunization card, 36(12.59%) from media like newspaper, television, magazine, booklets, medical books, internet, 4(1.4%) learned it from health campaign, 3(1.05%) from non-governmental organization and 1(0.35%) from school.

#### **IV. Discussion**

The current study assessed the knowledge on breastfeeding of antenatal mothers at a tertiary care hospital. In a similar but slightly different comparative study among 'Counselled on breastfeeding' and 'Non-counselled' rural mothers, conducted by Gunasekaran Dhandapani, in Pondicherry, age range of both ages groups were 19 to 23 years, all mothers were from rural areas and joint families and were either housewives or daily waged labourers. They had received formal school education from fourth to tenth grade. Of the 108 antenatal booked mothers, 23 (21%) had received antenatal counselling on breastfeeding while 85 (79%) had not received any such counselling. In the 'Counselled' group 87% were aware that breastfeeding should be initiated immediately after birth and 78% knew that exclusive breastfeeding should be continued for 6 months while in the 'Not counselled' group, only 19% and 22% were aware of the same, respectively. However, even in the 'Counselled' group awareness regarding correct breastfeeding technique and knowledge of continuing breastfeeding during illness in the baby was not different from those in the 'Not counselled' group.<sup>6</sup>

In another study aiming at comparing awareness and attitude regarding breast feeding among two generations women in Maharashtra conducted by Pandey Deeksha, Sardana Parnita et al., showed that the overall awareness regarding 'breast milk' being the best food for baby was excellent (overall 97.3%; younger generation: 96.9%; elder generation: 97.7%). Overall knowledge regarding the correct technique (28.9% younger generation and 21.9% elder generation) and frequency of breastfeeding (20.3% of younger generation and 34.4% of elder generation) was very poor. Less than 60% (younger generation: 57.8%; elder generation: 58.6%) were aware that the only major contraindication for breastfeeding is a mother infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). With regards to the attitude, only 94.5% women in younger generation and 89.1% women in elder generation were planning to give mother's milk as the first feed to the newborn; less than 75% of women were ready to breast-feed the newborn immediately after birth whereas 86% of pregnant women were aware that the baby should be breast-fed within an hour of birth.<sup>7</sup>

#### **V. Conclusion:**

The current study analysed the awareness on breastfeeding among antenatal mothers in a urban institutional set-up. It concluded that though majority of mothers were aware of proper breastfeeding practices, only a small portion of them still do not had proper information. Similar studies also should be conducted among rural and socioeconomically backward mothers. Findings of these studies can be used to take necessary measures to improve the mothers' knowledge. Every mother should receive advice on breast feeding both verbally and through information-education-communication (IEC) materials like pamphlets and charts in the hospital premises, preferably in antenatal clinic. In spite of numerous advertisements in mass media like television, radio, newspapers a handful of mothers have said that they have not received any information regarding breast feeding. Some of them have said about giving honey as prelacteal feed. Some of them don't know the correct timing and duration of breast feeding. These issues can be resolved through specific health education.

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**Tables and diagram:**

**Table 1:** Age-wise distribution of mothers under study.  
(n=349)

Age group (in years)	Mothers No.(%)
<=19	12(3.44%)
20-24	154(44.13)
25-29	142(40.69)
30-34	32(9.17)
35-39	8(2.29)
>=40	1(0.29)
Total	349(100.00)

**Table 2.** Distribution of antenatal mothers according to knowledge on advantages and disadvantages of breast feeding. (n=349)

	Frequency of response No.(%)
<b>Advantages of breast feeding</b>	
Good for baby's health	222(63.61)
Protect from diseases/ gives immunity	62(17.77)
Gives nutrition to baby	39(11.17)
Helps in development of memory	33(9.46)
Better than other milk/ other milk is harmful/ mother's milk is best for baby	20(5.73)
Protects form cough and cold	7(2.01)
Good for eyes	6(1.72)
Don't know	47(13.47)
<b>Disadvantages of breast feeding</b>	
Transmission diseases / HIV	4(1.15)
Affects mother's health/ mother become weak	9(2.58)
Don't know	336(96.28)

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