

HAVE THE NATIONAL NORMS OF INFANT FEEDING PRACTICES PERCOLATED TO THE GRASS ROOTS IN EAST GODAVARI DISTRICT??

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INTRODUCTION: Nutritional status of infants depends on feeding practices prevalent in the community. Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and timely introduction of complementary foods are important for laying down proper foundations of growth for later childhood. A study of prevalent infant feeding practices is essential before formulation of any need based intervention programme with aspect of introduction of complementary feeding in children. An effort was made to study the infant feeding practices in rural areas with respect to pattern of breastfeeding and weaning children 6 to 12 months of age and prevalence of traditional foods and feeding with commercial milk and infant weaning formula were also observed. **OBJECTIVES:** 1) To assess the practice of exclusive breastfeeding among infants. 2) To assess the introduction and continuation of complementary feeds for children of age 6 to 12 months. 3) To compare these with National norms. 4) To identify gaps between the prevailing feeding practices and National norms. **Material and Methods:** A cross-sectional observational study was done in three sub-centers attached to one Primary health center U.Kothapalli which is nearly 23kms from the District HQ over a period of 2 weeks in the months of July and August 2015. The total number of children in the age group of 6 to 12 months in these sub-centers are 283. One hundred and seven (107) children were covered during the study period. The information was documented by interviewing the mothers of these children using pretested semi-structured pro-forma. The 24-hour recall period and regular intake for assessing feeding practices was selected because it is widely used and found appropriate in surveys of dietary intake. Data analysis was done by using a software Excel. **Results:** 83% infants received colostrum within 72 hrs, 17% used pre-lacteal feeds along with colostrum, exclusive breastfeeding was practiced only in 29% of infants upto 6 months and 53% are between 4 to 5 months remaining are < 3 months. Timely complementary feeding was seen among 53%. There are 47% of mothers who are using homemade traditional foods and 38% were using commercial foods along with them. About 64% mothers were using the protective foods. Only 23% are using Energy Dense foods. Instant foods are practiced only in 4 per cent.

CONCLUSION: National norms regarding Infant feeding practices do not seem to have percolated down to the grass root levels of East Godavari District in terms of frequency of feeds, supplementation with energy dense foods and use of commercial foods. IMSF Act is not being implemented. **KEYWORDS:** Exclusive breast feeding, Complementary feeds, Commercial foods.