

IS UNIVERSAL EXCLUSIVE BREAST FEEDING A REALITY ?

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Introduction: Infants (0-1) constitute about 2.92 % of total population in India. Of the 136 million children born every year in the world, 90% are in the third world. In India, breastfeeding is believed to be God's gift and cultural practices influence its initiation. Feeding babies with culture specific foods immediately after birth are harmful to babies and should be discouraged. **Objective:** To understand the breast feeding practices adopted in the study population. **Materials & methods:** The cluster sampling method was adopted to draw sample for this study. From the list of 101 slums in Kakinada 20 clusters were selected. The target was to cover randomly 15 mothers within 12-23 months aged children (as that of MICS - Multi Indicator Cluster Survey) in each slum. The total sample surveyed was 300 mothers. Data was collected from the mothers of index child using pretested, predesigned, prescheduled questionnaire during June to December 2014. Data analysis was done by using Excel & SPSS 17. **Results:** 50% of the index children belong to 2nd birth order where as 44.3% belong to 1st birth order. 63.7% of households were Hindu followed by Christians(23%) & Muslims (13.3%). 68.6% of mothers belongs to OBC. 84% of the mothers were illiterates. 29.3% of mothers have given their children pre lacteal feeds. Among them 40% gave honey, 27.3% gave sugar water and 10.2% gave jaggery water. In case of pre-lacteal feeding the difference in proportions across categories is found to be statistically significant for caste and religion. Mothers who have given pre-lacteal feeds have also give colostrums. 84% of the mothers fed their children with colostrums, remaining 16% discarded colostrum. Chi-square analysis shows significant difference between mother's education and colostrum feeding to index child. 14.6% of mothers exclusively breast fed their babies for 6months, 58% up to 3-5 months. 22.2% of mothers were able to exclusively feed for 1-3months. **Conclusion:** Practice of exclusive breast feeding for 6months is very low (14%) way off the target of 80% and more under the national guidelines. A little more than 50% of them seem to give exclusive breast feeding for 3-5months suggesting that this segment should be addressed by the health worker to improve the rate of exclusive breast feeding for more than 60%. Mothers should be advised about harmful effects of pre-lacteal feeds, importance of feeding colostrum, and about healthy breast feeding practices.

Keywords: colostrum, pre-lacteal feed, exclusive breast feeding, urban slum.