

ABSTRACT

Newborn care is important in determining health and survival of it includes care during pregnancy, perinatal and postpartum periods. Though care can be provided by several categories of care givers, care provided by mother at home is vital in the Sri Lankan setting. Despite having a number of programs for improvement of newborn care, unsatisfactory level of knowledge and practices of mothers on neonatal can be still found among Sri Lankan mothers. Due to socio cultural situation of the society Sri Lankan mothers have to face specific set of problems in provision of newborn care. This study was carried out with the objective of assessing knowledge of mothers on provision of care to their newborns in the Medical Officer of Health areas Balapitiya and Karandeniya, two adjoining areas in the Galle District and to describe their practices and problems encountered in care giving and the associated factors.

A cross sectional survey was carried out among 425 mothers who attended clinics with babies aged one to one half months and were residing for more than six months in MOH areas Balapitiya and Ambalangoda. An interviewer administered questionnaire, was used to collect data. Data was analyzed using statistical soft wear package SPSS 16.0

Among mothers 54.1% (n=208) belonged to MOH area Balapitiya. Of the mothers 74.6% (n=317) belonged to age group 20-35; 97.9% and 97.4% of mothers were Sinhalese and Buddhist respectively. Among mothers 98.1 % (n=417) were legally married and only 11.2 % (n=48) were employed. Literacy rate of mothers was 92.2% (n=391). All newborns were aged between 29-45 days. Sex ratio was 103.3 boys per 100 girls. Of the newborns 17.4 % (n=74) were low birth weight, 13.6% (n=58) were pre term and 38.6% (n=164) were born by caesarian section. Majority 86.4% (n=367) of newborns were born at BH Hospital Balapitiya and only 8.5% (n=36) of babies was born in a hospital other than Base Hospital Balapitiya. There was a statistically significant association between low birth weight and receiving special care immediately after birth ($p<0.05$) and developing health problem at birth ($p<0.01$).

Educational status of spouse was higher than that of the mothers, proportion of mothers and spouse; who had studied up to year five was 7.8 % and 11.3% respectively.

The median knowledge score of the study population was 37 out of total 44. Among mothers 53.6% (n=228) had satisfactory knowledge on neonatal care. There was a

statistically significant association between satisfactory knowledge of mothers on newborn care and religion ($p < 0.05$), marital status of mothers ($p < 0.05$) and type of family (nuclear or extended) ($p < 0.05$). Of the mothers 78.8% ($n = 335$) had practiced satisfactory newborn care practices. Monthly income of the family is the only variable, which had a statistically significant association with overall practice score ($p < 0.05$).

The most frequently occurring difficulty the mothers experienced was not having adequate sleep 61.5% ($n = 287$). Only 18.4% ($n = 78$) of mothers had faced economical difficulties, 96% ($n = 408$) agreed that the service provided by PHM was satisfactory. Breast feeding difficulties and pustules in the skin are the two main health problems experienced by 22.1% ($n = 96$) and 19.5% ($n = 81$) newborns respectively. Among mothers 61.3% ($n = 269$) has received health advices from PHM. Majority of mothers 98.0% ($n = 382$) have acquired knowledge at antenatal clinics and only 23.8% ($n = 101$) at antenatal wards.

Majority of mothers was Sinhalese, Buddhists and unemployed with literacy rate of 92.2%. Newborns of the study belonged to age of 29-45 days with sex ratio of 103.3% and rate of low birth weight 17.45. Approximately 15% of families had monthly income of <5000 rupees. More than 62.5% ($n = 263$) mothers satisfactory overall knowledge on danger signs of newborns. More than 53.6% of mothers had satisfactory overall knowledge on newborn care. More than 76% of mothers have practiced the correct breast feeding practices. More than 69% of mothers have practiced correct cord care practices. In general 78.8% ($n = 335$) of newborns have received “satisfactory” newborn care practice. Association between level of practice and monthly income was significant. The commonest problem encountered by mothers was inadequate sleep. Breast feeding difficulties and pustules in the skin were commonest problems. Assistance by spouse and family members was satisfactory. The commonest source of health information was the PHM, during antenatal period.

Knowledge of mothers on cord care and keeping baby hygienic and recognition of danger signs has to be improved. Quality of service provided by PHM has to be improved. Participation of spouses in newborn care has to be strengthened.

Keyword: Newborn care. Newborn .