

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Establishment of breast feeding is very important during immediate post natal period to prevent unhealthy consequences to both mother and the baby. The key to establish the breast feeding during this period would be the proper practice of breast feeding techniques. There are several factors which influence on breast feeding techniques. Identifying and addressing those factors will be helpful to improve breast feeding techniques among mothers in the post natal ward.

Objective

Assessing the techniques of breast feeding and to describe factors associated with inappropriate positioning and poor attachment of the baby during feeding, among post natal mothers at De Soysa Maternity Hospital, Colombo was the objective of the study.

Methodology

A hospital based descriptive cross sectional study was conducted to assess the techniques of breast feeding and to describe factors associated with inappropriate positioning and poor attachment of the baby during feeding, among post natal mothers in all postnatal wards. Mothers admitted to all post natal wards at the hospital were the study population. Sample was calculated as 403. A non probability consecutive sampling technique was adopted.

An interviewer- administered questionnaire and an observation checklists were used to collect the data from the subjects. Data collection and observation of practice of breast feeding techniques were done by the principal investigator. Data were collected during the months of July and August, 2010.

Proportions of inappropriate positioning and poor attachment were calculated. Factors were cross analyzed to assess the relationship with inappropriate positioning and poor attachment. Chi-squared test (and Fishers exact test when relevant) was used wherever appropriate to assess their association. A p value of 0.05 was used to determine significance.

Results

Proportion of inappropriate positioning of the baby at breast feeding was 14.9% while proportion of poor attachment of the baby at breast feeding was 8.5% among postnatal mothers at De Soysa Maternity Hospital.

Most of the study population (80.2%) had a 'good' knowledge on technique of positioning of the baby at breast feeding. Only 1% had 'good' knowledge on attachment of the baby at breast feeding. The knowledge on correct way of encouraging the baby to take the nipple at breast feeding was 32.2%. No one knew about the correct method of breaking the attachment of the baby while 100% knew the burping technique correctly. The proportion of knowledge on manual expression of breast milk and cup/spoon feeding were 2.3% and 9.5% respectively.

Of mothers 80.3% have had skin to skin contact with the baby within half hour of the delivery and 91.2% were able to breast feed at first contact with the baby while 86.8% mothers had started breast feeding within one hour of the delivery. Help by a health worker at first occasion of breast feeding was received by 97.7% of mothers while 99% mothers were roomed-in with the baby. The bed had to be shared by another mother-baby pair by 21.4% mothers. A chair was available near the bed for 85.3% mothers.

None of the socio-demographic characteristics assessed in the study were associated with inappropriate positioning and poor attachment of the baby at breast feeding. Among pregnancy and delivery related factors having a baby with a birth weight of less than 2.5kg and more than 3.5kg were significantly associated with inappropriate positioning of the baby at breast feeding ($p=0.000$ for both association). Possessing a level of 'poor' knowledge on technique of positioning of the baby at breast feeding was significantly associated with the inappropriate positioning of the baby at breast feeding ($p=0.008$).

The other factors which were significantly associated with the inappropriate positioning of the baby at breast feeding were delay in the time of first contact of mother and baby ($p=0.000$), delay in initiation of breast feeding ($p=0.000$), the non receipt of help by a

health worker for the positioning of the baby at first occasion of breast feeding ($p=0.000$), not sharing the bed with another mother-baby pair in the hospital during postnatal period ($p=0.000$), unavailability of a chair near the bed ($p=0.000$), not feeding of manually expressed breast milk ($p=0.033$) and not breast feeding at first contact ($p=0.013$).

Not practicing rooming-in ($p=0.000$), delay in the time of first contact of mother and baby ($p=0.041$), delay in initiation of breast feeding ($p=0.024$), not sharing the bed with another mother-baby pair in the hospital during postnatal period ($p=0.007$) and preferred position of the mother at breast feeding ($p=0.011$) were significantly associated with poor attachment of the baby at breast feeding.

Conclusions and recommendations

Proportions of inappropriate positioning of the baby at breast feeding poor attachment of the baby at breast feeding was found to be low. Practices in the post natal ward which can influence inappropriate positioning and poor attachment, were found to be satisfactory.

The study identified some factors which are associated with inappropriate positioning and poor attachment, that can be modified. Interventions targeted at those factors in the immediate post partum period are recommended to further improve establishment of breast feeding in post partum mothers.

Key words

Breast feeding in immediate post partum period, breast feeding techniques, inappropriate positioning of the baby at breast feeding, poor attachment of the baby at breast feeding.