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Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices and nutritional status of children under 5 years of Chenchu primitive tribe in India

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Background: The Chenchus are primitive tribe; a designated Scheduled Tribe in India. They inhabit in the Nallamala forest hilly areas spread in both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States. They are an aboriginal tribe whose traditional way of life has been based on hunting and gathering. They are a Proto-Australoid tribe and depend on forest produce for their livelihood and both men and women participate in hunting. Similarly, they had distinct socio-culture habits, food habits and food taboos. Appropriate infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices are pre-requisite for optimal growth and development of the children and inappropriate feeding practices are significantly associated with children under 5 mortality.

Objective: To study the IYCF practices and nutritional status of under 5 year children of Chenchu primitive tribe.

Materials & Methods: A community based cross-sectional study was carried out among 422 Chenchu children less than 5 years of age. Information on socio-demographic particulars and IYCF practices was collected. Weight and height of the children were measured. Appropriate descriptive statistics were performed using SPSS version 19.0. The association between the IYCF practices and nutritional status of children was assessed using chi-square test. The p-value of <0.05 is considered as statistically significant.

Results: About 67% of the mothers initiated breast feeding to their new-born within one hour of the delivery and a majority (92%) of mothers fed colostrum to the infants. The proportion of mothers fed exclusive breast feeding for the first 6 months was 50.2% and about 58% of mothers initiated complementary food to their infant by completion of 6 months. In general, the prevalence of underweight, stunting and wasting among under 5 year children was 42.1%, 56.1% and 16.7%, respectively and no significant difference was found between genders. Though statistically not significant, the prevalence of under nutrition was relatively lower among children exclusively breast fed for the first six months of age ($p>0.05$). While, a significantly lower prevalence of stunting ($p<0.001$) and wasting ($p<0.05$) was reported among those children initiated with complementary feeding at appropriate time i.e. immediately after completion of first six months of age.

Conclusions: In general, the IYCF practices are poor among the mothers of Chenchu primitive tribe, where only about half of the mothers exclusively breast fed their infants and initiated complementary food at an appropriate time. These inappropriate IYCF practices were reflected in poor nutritional status of under 5 year children. Therefore, health and nutrition education (HNE) should be imparted to the mothers through the IEC activities and behavioural change communication (BCC) to adopt the appropriate IYCF practices.

Biography

Nikhil Kumar Kotla, MBBS, has graduated from Kamineni Institute of Medical Sciences, Telangana, India in February (2017). He is passionate about research which enhances human wellbeing. He also has clinical experience in the United States of America. He has published one research article in an international journal. He is interested in pursuing his career in the field of Diagnostic Medicine and Clinical Research.

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