

ROLE OF LACTATION IN FAMILY PLANNING

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ABSTRACT:

Objectives:

1. To evaluate the role of Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM) as a spacing method.
2. To assess knowledge attitude and practices regarding breast feeding.
3. To bring awareness regarding importance of breast feeding on child health and as a method of family planning so that exclusive breast feeding is promoted.

Study Design: Cross sectional study

Setting: In rural village of district Wardha

Study Universe: All the lactating mothers who had 2 children (one of which was <3 years)

Study Variables: Duration of Breast Feeding, LAM, Importance of Breast Feeding, Knowledge of Colostrum, Awareness of Breast Feeding, etc.

Statistical analysis used: Percentages and proportions

Result: A total 42 families were included in the survey of which 26 (61.9%) belongs to nuclear families with majority of the women 19 (45.2%) in the age group of 20-25 yrs, 20 (47.6%) were illiterate and 18 (42.8%) families were of lower Socio Economic Status. A directly proportional relationship was found between duration of breast feeding & LAM and period of LAM & age of youngest child when the mother delivered again. Only 31% knew about the importance of breast feeding. 16.6% of woman initiated Breast Feeding within ½ hr.

Introduction:

The benefit of breast feeding for well being and total development of baby is very well established. We know that the breast fed babies are less prone to diarrhoea and ARI. Besides this Breast feeding is important variable which protect from pregnancy through post partum amenorrhea and prolonged birth interval.

Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM) as an effective introductory family planning method that was presented at Bellgio consensus conference data from 13 studies done in 8 countries found that "Breast feeding provides about 98% protection from pregnancy during the 1st six months of post partum if mother is fully or nearly breast feeding and has not yet experienced vaginal bleeding after 56th day post partum".

Normally without Breast feeding the average period of Amenorrhea is only 1½ to 2 months and in mothers who practice exclusive Breast feeding are less likely to resume menstruation than if weaning foods are started.

Breast feeding period varies from one culture to another also use of other contraceptives methods has effect on birth rate.

The exact mechanism of how breast feeding act as method of contraception is well known -- hormonal action initiated by lactation "contraceptive effect remains till the Breast feeding continues but weakness over period of time".

In condition where other family planning methods are not

available or not desired LAM can be introduced as an appropriate alternative method of fertility control.

Material and Methods:

A cross-sectional study was carried out at Sawli village, District Wardha among the mothers who had 2 children one of which was <3 years. They were interviewed by predesigned, pre tested proforma to assess the relation between period of Breast feeding & LAM, LAM & duration between two conceptions and lastly to assess knowledge attitude and practice regarding breast feeding. Following the survey a "focus group discussion" was done to share & address their experiences, queries on knowledge, attitude and practices about Breast feeding and LAM.

Results:

A total of 42 families were surveyed in village Sawli (Sastabad). One women of reproductive age group (15-45 years) from each family with at least 2 children one of which was < 3 years were interviewed except 02 who had only one child (<3 years).

Out of 42 families, 26 (61.9%) belongs to nuclear families, majority of the women 19 (45.2%) were between age group of 20-25 yrs followed by 26-30 yrs (38.0%). Most of the women 20 (47.6%) were illiterate followed by primary level in 11 (26.1%). It was found that 18 (42.8%) families were of lower Socio Economic Status, 14 (33.3%) were of upper lower SES.

Table 1
RELATION BETWEEN PERIOD OF BREAST FEEDING AND LAM

Breast Feeding (Months)	Average LAM (Months)	No. of Women
0-6th	4.5	2
7th-12th	6	4
13th-18th	13.3	9
19th-24th	16.3	17
25th-30th	18.1	8

Table 2
RELATION BETWEEN PERIOD OF LAM & AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD WHEN SHE DELIVERED AGAIN

Duration of Average Lactational Amenorrhoea (Months)	Average age of youngest child when she delivered again	No.
0-6 th	18.2	5
7 th -12 th	22.5	6
13 th -18 th	27.5	23
19 th -24 th	29.6	6

A directly proportional relation was observed between the breast feeding vs LAM and LAM & Age of youngest child when she delivered again. (Table 1, 2).

Table 3
KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BREAST FEEDING & COLOSTRUM

	Know		Don't Know	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
Importance of Breast Feeding	13	30.9	29	69
Knowledge about Colostrum	6	14.2	36	85.5

Table 3 shows that only 31 % women knew about the importance of Breast Feeding and 14.2 % knew the importance of colostrum.

Table 4
AWARENESS ABOUT BREAST FEEDING

	%	No.
Aware	21.4	9
Not Aware	78.6	33

($X^2=27.4$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$)

Table 4 shows that only 21 % females were aware about the importance of exclusive breast feeding.

Table 5
PRACTICES REGARDING BREAST FEEDING

Duration After Birth	%	No.
Immediately within 1/2 hr	16.6	7
1/2 - 3 hrs	21.4	9
1 - 3 days	47.6	20
> 3 days	14.2	6
Total	99.8	42

Table 5 shows that 16.6 % of woman initiated Breast Feeding within ½ hr, 21.4 % within ½ - 3 hrs. 47.6% within 1-3 days and 14.2 % after 3 days.

Table 6
COLOSTRUM GIVEN OR NOT GIVEN

Colostrum	%	No.
Given	61.9	26
Not Given	38.1	16
Total	100	42

($X^2=4.76$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$)

Table 6 shows that about 62 % women gave colostrum to the new born.

Discussion :

It has been estimated that 50% of pregnancies are unwanted and / or unplanned. For several reasons including difficulty in obtaining contraceptives, no or ineffective contraception is used to prevent these unwanted pregnancies⁽¹⁾ Even though women have known for centuries that breast feeding has a contraceptive effect, family planning has only recently promoted it⁽²⁾ At a consensus conference in Bellagio, Italy, it was agreed that breast feeding confers more than 98% protection from pregnancy during the first 6 months postpartum⁽³⁾. The LAM is a highly efficient tool for the women to utilise; physiology to space births as suckling induces a reduction in gonadotropin releasing hormone, luteinizing hormone and follicle stimulating hormone release, resulting in amenorrhoea, through an intracerebral opioid pathway⁽⁴⁾. However the efficacy and effectiveness of LAM is affected by its correct usage and there are certain criteria which must be fulfilled.

In the present study the result of knowledge, attitude and practices regarding Breast feeding was found to be low as most of lactating women did not knew the use of colostrum. Almost 69% gave exclusive breast feeding till 4-6 months of age with a total duration of breast feeding of 1 ½ - 2 years that was associated with inadequate weaning practices in most of the cases.

On the other hand nobody knew the relation between

duration of breast feeding & lactational amenorrhoea with average duration of 13 months.

Further to state their status regarding awareness about LAM as contraceptive cannot be very well established on the basis of FGD as the participants of discussion was less than 1/3 rd of the total respondents, although it was clear that none of them knew the role of breast feeding as a method of family planning. Varul B and colleagues also reported in their study on women of reproductive age group in India that almost 52% of the women were not aware of the contraceptive effect of breast feeding and that only 25.7% knew that lactation has a contraceptive effect. Lactation was accepted as a contraceptive method by 48.2% of the women.⁽⁵⁾ Susu B and others also reported that only 17% of women who used traditional method relied on LAM. Women mainly asked about what contraception method were available, when to start use and where to obtain contraception⁽⁶⁾.

Conclusion :

A mass education campaign about advantages of breast feeding can be initiated more so in developing countries like India. This campaign should also include Urban setup including Urban Slums, where due to increased birth rate and changing attitudes had led to bottle feeding practices. Breast feeding has strong fertility inhibiting effect and so lactational amenorrhoea method can be taken as an available, reliable and introductory family planning method that simultaneously

contributes to increased family planning practices which in turn improves maternal and child health.

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