

Preliminary study on the awareness and behavior of mothers living in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa regarding early breastfeeding

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[Abstract]

Background:

In Sub-Saharan Africa, malnutrition is a major cause of infant mortality. The WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding, stating that "if breastfeeding is initiated within one hour of birth, continued exclusively for six months, and maintained for more than two years, children can be protected from malnutrition, including wasting and obesity." This study aimed to clarify the awareness and behavior of mothers with weaning children living in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa regarding early breastfeeding and to serve as a preliminary investigation to address nutritional issues among children in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Methods:

We conducted an interview survey with 20 mothers or caregivers of weaning infants living in rural areas of Benin regarding breastfeeding practices in the first three days after birth. The questionnaire was developed based on previous research and in consultations with local nutritionists, who collaborated on the study.

Results:

Thirteen mothers (65%) breastfed their newborns within one hour of birth, and 13 (65%) caregivers administered "medicinal herbs" to their newborns during the first three days after birth. The use of medicinal herbs was primarily attributed to traditional health practices, such as "to expel meconium quickly," "to expel waste products," and "promoting faster umbilical cord healing."

Discussion:

According to the WHO report, about 80% of people in Benin use traditional medicine, complementary and alternative medicine. To promote optimal nutrition in newborns, interventions that support early breastfeeding should involve families. In addition, more detailed interview surveys are needed to gain a deeper understanding of local practices and beliefs.

keywords : malnutrition, early breastfeeding, Sub-Saharan Africa