

Growth patterns of breast-fed and formula-fed infants from (0-6) months in the Kelaniya M.O.H. area

Exclusive breast -feeding of infants up to four months of age is highly promoted by the local health authority but traditional infant feeding methods such as giving water, glucose water, kanji, fruit juices etc. in addition to the breast milk, still prevail in all communities. Responses of both mother and infants towards these practices were studied by assessing the nutritional status of the infants below 6 months of age in Kelaniya M.O.H. area.

The target population was infants below three months of age and the sample size was 125. The individual infants selected were weighed at each visit to the child welfare clinic until they completed 6 months of age. Mothers were interviewed by using a questionnaire in order to collect information on infants' particulars such as date of birth, sex and birth weight etc. feeding method and weaning practices and the socio-economic status of the respective family. The data obtained were analyzed by using the Z score, Chi square test and the analysis of variances.

The results revealed that there was no statistically significant effect of feeding method on weight of the infants up to the age of 6 months. 8.3% of infants studied were found below the -2SD according to the Z score. Factors such as mother's literacy, family income and the birth weight had no statistically significant effect on the weight of infants. 42.4% of mothers surveyed have exclusively breast-fed their infants for the first four months whereas the rest of mothers pointed out various reasons as to why they couple other foods and fluids with breast milk. Among the reasons given by mothers lack of confidence, elders' influences, mother's employment and infants' thirst etc were of significance. The mean age of weaning was 3.9 months and kanji, vegetable soup, biscuits and *Cerelac* (commercially available weaning food) were used as the first weaning foods. Irrespective to the feeding method, incidences of diarrhoea and respiratory infections were less among the infants studied.