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How knowledgeable are mothers on home-based care for common illnesses among pre-schoolers?

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Pre-schoolers are prone to common illnesses and injuries. As the main care-giver, mothers should be knowledgeable on providing care at home for such children. This study describes the knowledge on home-based care for common illnesses of pre-schoolers and its associated factors among mothers in an urban area.

A cross-sectional study was conducted among 132 mothers of pre-schoolers attending the immunization clinic at Lady Ridgeway Hospital. They were selected using a systematic random sampling method. Using an interviewer-administered-questionnaire, socio-demographic characteristics of participants and their knowledge on home-based management of fever, diarrhoea, foreign body insertion, home injuries and febrile convulsions based on a score ranging from 0-108 were assessed. Knowledge scores obtained were further converted to percentages to categorise the participants into 2 groups: 'good' knowledge (score > 75%) and 'poor' knowledge (score ≤ 75%) on overall home-based care and on management of each illness.

The majority of mothers were housewives (68.9%); educated up to Ordinary Level (75.8%); and from nuclear families (64.4%). The average score obtained for overall knowledge on home-based care was 87.6 (SD = 9) with a median of 81. The majority of participants showed 'good knowledge' (score > 75%) on overall home-based care (78.8%) and on specific management of fever (69.7%), diarrhoea (76.5%), injuries (62.9%) and foreign body insertion (84.1%). However, most did not know the importance of tepid sponging during fever (56%); feeding with no restrictions during diarrhoea (44.7%) and how to prepare oral rehydration solution (46.5%) while burns were managed using creams/lotions (57.6%) and grease/butter (62.2%). A higher level of education was significantly associated with knowledge on managing fever diarrhoea, injuries and convulsions; extended families with knowledge on managing febrile convulsions; and knowledge on managing diarrhoea was significantly higher with higher number of children ($p < 0.05$). In conclusion, mothers were knowledgeable on home-based care for most illnesses among pre-schoolers. Health education provided, particularly for poorly educated mothers of small sized nuclear families could further improve their domiciliary care.

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