

Traditional use of Prelacteals in Lahore, Pakistan – an institution-based study

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Abstract

To document the frequency and type of pre-lacteal use in our population. Prelacteal are the feeds given to newborn babies instead of breast feeding and a common practise in various cultures all over the world. Prelacteal use is a traditional practise in Pakistan as well, having religious (in Islam) roots. Commonly used prelacteals are honey, sugar and ghutti (herbal mixture), amongst many. There is strong evidence that use of prelacteal interferes with establishment of breast-feeding. It was a questionnaire-based study involving females of childbearing age, done over a period of six months. Interviews were held during obstetric ward rounds and neonatal OPD visits in Fatima Memorial Hospital, Lahore. Total of 1601 females were interviewed. The mean age was 30.9 years (IQR 10). Majority of interviewed female were married (57.5%), of these, 34% had one to two children. Most of the women belonged to urban areas (83%) and 45% had completed at least 10 years of school education. Medical related personnel accounted for advice about newborn feeding in 61.7% cases. But 38% of females were advised by grandmothers or close relatives regarding use of pre lacteals and breast-feeding. When asked about pre lacteals, 62.5% women had either used or wanted to use it. However, 92% also knew about feeding the babies colostrum and 96.9% wanted to start and continue with breast feeding. In addition to prelacteal use, 53.9% wanted to breast feed within 1st hour of life. Honey was the commonest choice in prelacteals (45.2%) with ghutti use (6.7%) in second place. The use of prelacteal is prevalent in Pakistan culture, irrespective of education, age, or medical education. The positive thing is that prelacteal use is mostly traditional (one time use only) and breast feeding has been preferred by most of women. Rather than ignoring or teaching against prelacteal, the safe and limited (one time) use of safe prelacteals should be accepted.

Biography

Zahid Anwar is from Fatima Memorial Hospital, Lahore



[International Conference on Pediatrics and Neonatal Care | July14, 2020](#)

Citation: Waseem Jan, *Pattern of congenital malformations in babies born after assisted reproductive technology and their surgical outcomes*, Neonatal care 2020, International Conference on Paediatrics and Neonatal Care, July14, 2020, Page 11