

The Duration of Breast-Feeding and Causes of Early Weaning in Tikrit City.

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Abstract

This study concerned the practice of breast-feeding and causes of weaning among child bearing women in Tikrit city. The duration of breast-feeding and the number of infants who are breast fed of different ages varies from country to country. It is believed that the prevalence and duration of breast-feeding are declining in many parts of the world for a variety of social, economical and cultural reasons as results more frequent infections such as diarrhea and upper respiratory infections.

This study revealed that most women weaned their infants during the first 6 months of life (40.6%) and the percentage decrease as the duration of breast-feeding. Regarding the most causes of early weaning, the results showed that the milk-insufficiency is the most common cause of early weaning (45%) followed by the age of infants (22%). Data showed that 67.8% of total mothers were housewives while 32.2% were employed mothers.

Introduction

The duration of breast-feeding and the number of infant feed at different ages varies from country to country (1). The breast milk is the only source of food for a high proportion of children aged 6-12 months and beyond (2).

The pattern of infant feeding, duration and causes of weaning in a particular country depends upon culture patterns and beliefs than upon medical and nutritional advice; in recent years, socioeconomic and commercial interests have artificial influences on the pattern on infant feeding.

The aim of this study is to assess the duration of breast-feeding and recognize the common causes of weaning in Tikrit city.

Patients and methods

The material of the study was mothers having infants under two years old attending primary health care centers (PHCC) and Tikrit General Hospital in Tikrit. A sample of 500 mothers was selected from attendants. A pretested questionnaire was used to collect data of the study. Mothers were interviewed concerning family characteristics such as educational level and weaning age and infant feeding practices. Data was analyzed using a master table.

Results

The duration of breast -feeding is shown in Table 1. Most women (40.6%) weaned their infants during the first 6 months of life.

The percentage decrease as the duration increase towards 24 months which show only 15% of women complete 2 years duration of breast-feeding.

Table 2 shows that the most common causes of early weaning among breast-fed infants. Milk insufficiency is the most common cause of early weaning (45%) followed by age of infants (22%). Table 3 shows that 339 (67%) of total mothers were housewives, while 161 (32.2%) were employed mothers.

Discussion

Breast-feeding is the most important method of infant feeding. Despite the common belief that breast-feeding changes have occurred in urban populations declines have been reported also in rural areas of several countries (3-5). The prevalence of breast-feeding declines with age. El-Sayed *et al* (6) showed that the majority of infants being breast fed was in the age group less than three months and percentage declined to (34.7%) in the age group more than one year. In our study, (31%) of infant's mothers continue to breast fed within two years. Prevalence figures in different age group reported in our study were higher than those recorded in the previous study. This can be attributed to positive role played by health professionals regarding the protection, promotion and support of breast-feeding.

There is a wide variability in the duration of breast-feeding both among individuals and among populations. This variability is due to several factors such as maternal age, parity, mother's education and occupation (7). Our study revealed that the strongest significant factor affecting breast-feeding duration is maternal education and occupation. The educational level of the mother is inversely related to the duration of breast-feeding.

There are many studies available showing different reasons for early weaning both in rural and urban areas (8,9). El—Sayed *et al* (6) reported that one third of mothers reported dryness (insufficient milk) as the main reasons for stopping breast feeding at an early age. The second cause was the onset of a new pregnancy. This study shows that (45%) of mothers were complain the insufficient milk and for this reason they start to use bottle feeding.

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Table 1: Duration time of breast-feeding.

Duration time (months)	Number	%
0-6	203	40.6
7-12	142	28.4
13 - 18	80	16.0
19 - 24	75	15.0
Total	500	100

Table 2: Causes of early weaning.

Reasons	Number	%
Insufficient milk	225	45
Age of infant	110	22
Mother's Age	45	9
Mother's illness	40	8
New Pregnancy	38	7.6
Other reasons	42	8.4
Total	500	100

Table 3: Relation between occupation and duration time.

Duration time (months)	Mother's Occupation			
	Housewives		Employed	
	Number	%	Number	%
0-6	150	30	53	10.6
7-12	95	19	47	9.4
13 - 18	54	10.8	26	5.2
19 - 24	40	8	35	7
Total	339	67.8	161	32.2