

EDITORIAL

Breast Feeding Practices in Slum of Bangladesh

Breast milk is the most appropriate and nutritious food for the baby's optimum physical growth and intellectual development. This is nature's own arrangement that a newly born baby will find its food in his/her mother's breast which is very accurate in respect of its composition and safety, having no chance of contamination. Moreover, breast milk is composed of nutritional elements which vary from species to species in terms of their nature and proportion e.g. human milk is not as same as that of cow's milk.

Unfortunately, the breast feeding practices of human beings are so erroneous unlike other mammals, and Almighty Allah has rightly directed in the Holy Qur'an – 'Mothers will give suckle to their offspring for complete two years'... '(Baqara- 233)'

For breast feeding practices not being followed correctly, factors like ignorance or lack of knowledge on parts of the parents, inadequate sources for parents to get the knowledge of breast feeding, wrong practices in the family or community, over enthusiasm of parents of putting their children on formula feeds for their better growth, easy availability of formula foods in the market and their charming and attractive advertises etc, are responsible, the net result of which is an increasing number of malnourished child population in the society. Amongst the 10.5 million under-five deaths due to 7 killer diseases annually more than 50% of them also suffer from malnutrition in addition.

Failure of breast feeding still occurs in the hospitals too. Parents should be explained about the benefits of breast feeding as well as the bad aspects of formula feeding in the antenatal check ups (ANC), during the days following delivery either in hospitals or clinics or in the community by the traditional birth attendants (TBA) or nurses who conduct the deliveries.

Breast-fed babies suffer less form infections like ARI and diarrhoeal diseases, eczema, better bondage is established between mothers and babies from breast feeding. Mothers who feed their babies exclusively (only breast feeding up to 6 months of age) remain more fit physically in contrary to their wrong belief; themselves suffer less from various types of cancers. Moreover, their families do not have to make extra budget for buying formula feeds.

Our people have poor knowledge of infant and child feeding - breast feeding, complementary feeds or even of formula feeds when they use it as a supplement or substitute of breast feeding. Sympathetic and patient explanation and support to our parents and families can help improving the situation of infant and child feeding practices.

'Practices of breast feeding under two years children in a selected slum of Dhaka City' published in this volume of Journal is a timely and worthy study carried out which has explored some possible causes for which remedies yet to be found out and applied.

Prof. ABM Rafiqul Hoque

FRCP, Edin

Head, Department of Paediatrics

Holy Family Red Crescent Medical College