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Contents

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1. Determination of Sex by Osteometry of Third Metatarsal 1
Arthy, Rohit Goel, Sreenivas M
2. Incidence of Tuberculosis in Unidentified Dead Bodies amongst Autopsy Conducted at Government Stanley Medical College and Hospital, Chennai 7
A.Gokulakrishnan, S.Praveen
3. Study of Lip Print Pattern among Young Individuals in Bangalore City..... 12
Chandru K, Naveena Preethi
4. Effectiveness of Educational Intervention on Knowledge & Attitude about MTP Act 1971 among Apparently Healthy Reproductive Age Group Population Visiting A Tertiary Care Centre, Puducherry..... 16
Fathima S, James Rajesh J, Jothi Marie Feula, Siva Reddy,
5. Study of Profile of Motor Vehicle Accidents in Thiruvanniyur Traffic Police Station..... 22
G.Shivani, V.Dekal
6. Demographic Profile of Poisoning Cases in a Tertiary Care Center in South India – An Observational Study 27
James Rajesh J, Sampath Kumar P, Priyadarshree Pradhan, Jothi Marie Feula A, Siva Reddy B
7. Estimation of Age through Elbow Joint in children of Karnataka 33
Manjunatha A
8. Identification of Sex of Sacrum in Karnataka Population 36
Manjunatha A
9. Demographic Profile and Pattern of Presentation of Organophosphorus Poisoning at Tertiary Care Hospital Agra..... 39
Mustaria Pankaj Kumar Shusil, Ajay Agarwal
10. Green Pitch- Be the Part of Solution 45
Nandhini V, Gayathri S, Sumathi H Rao, .P. B.Anand, T. Geetha,
11. A Four Years' Retrospective Study of Poisoning Cases in Southern India 49
P.C. Sahoo, Karma Mingur Diki Bhutia, Ashim Mishra

28.	Nurses Competence with Regard Congenital Heart Diseases in Cardiac Care Unit of Pediatric Hospital in Sulaimani City	149
	<i>Barw Azad mohammed , Aso Faeq Salih</i>	
29.	Assessment of Mother's Practice among Using Oral Rehydration Solution for their Children with Diarrhea in Babylon City.....	157
	<i>Abdulahdi A. Hasan</i>	
30.	Isolation and Identification Bacteria Species and Study Epidemiological Features to Burns Patients in Al- Yarmook Teaching Hospital	162
	<i>Faraj, H. Johni , Abdulla L. Jiad</i>	
31.	Critical Care Nurses' Knowledge about Pulmonary embolism in Respiratory Care Unit in Baghdad Teaching Hospitals	168
	<i>Massara Abdullah Najm, Aqeel H. Jassim, Tahseen R. Mohammed</i>	
32.	Assessment of Calprotectin Protein in H. Pylori Positive Persons.....	175
	<i>Salim Hussein Hassan, Balqees Sadoon Jasim , Maytham Salim AL-Nasrawii</i>	
33.	Knowledge and Awareness among Mothers Regarding Exclusive Breastfeeding in Holy Karbala City / Iraq.....	179
	<i>Maytham Salim Al-Nasrawii , Ali Neamah Hasan Al-Aaragi, Ali Abd Al-Latif G. Mohammed</i>	
34.	Effectiveness of an educational program on Nurses' Knowledge towards Nursing Management of Patients with Transurethral Resection of the Bladder Tumor at Hilla Teaching Hospitals.....	186
	<i>Basim Hasson Hussein, Halima Yusuf Al-Rubaiyee</i>	
35.	The Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) More Likely Creates to Irritable Bowel Syndrome	192
	<i>Abdul AL-Kareem Hamza</i>	
36.	Estimation of Parameters (Serum Glucose, Urea, Creatinine And C-Peptide) in Diabetic Nephropathy.....	198
	<i>Rukia A. Jassim , Zeena A. Alsaady</i>	
37.	Synthesis and Characterization of Some New β -lactams Using Drugs Diabetics Reduced.....	203
	<i>Mahmood Shakir Magtoof, Ali Ismail about</i>	
38.	A Chronic Toxicity Study of Oral Administration of Collagen- α^* Supplement using Pregnant Rabbits.....	210
	<i>Alia M. Kudayer, Nawras A. Alwan, Alaa A. Sawad</i>	
39.	Nurses' Knowledge Concerning the Management of Bleeding in Patients with Leukemia	216
	<i>Safad R. Isam</i>	
40.	The Histological Alteration of Proximal Part of Aorta Exposed to (MSG) and Protective Effect of an a Lipoic Acid (ALA) in Male Rabbits.....	222
	<i>Eman.M.Heil , Wefak Al-Bazi , Muna .Hussain AL-Aameli</i>	
41.	Effect of Pioneer Aeromedical Evacuation Program on Flight Medics' Practices toward Emergency Casualties at Army Aviation Bases in Iraq.....	229
	<i>Ammar Kadhum Gaeed , Huda Baker Hassan</i>	

Knowledge and Awareness among Mothers Regarding Exclusive Breastfeeding in Holy Karbala City / Iraq

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Abstract

Background: World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) "Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF)" is explained as "the infant receives only breast milk, no other liquids or solids. Its recommended for the first 6 months of life, and then complementary feeding should be started. EBF helps to reduce child morbidity and mortality from several diseases such as diarrhea, respiratory and / or ear infections and other infectious diseases, shielding lactation women from breast and ovarian cancer. In addition to offers societal economic and environmental benefits, The objective of this study was to assess the knowledge and awareness of exclusive breast feeding among mothers with a child < 2 years of age.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out in Health Directorate of Holy Karbala city. The study consist of (487) mothers how attendant to six Primary Health Care center (PHC). The collected data was done by direct interview with mothers and using a questionnaire form that designed based on the study objectives according to WHO criteria. Data were analyzed by SPSS " Statistical Package for the Social Sciences", the descriptive statistics included numbers (N) and percentage (%), and the inferential statistical test was done by using Chi-Square test (χ^2), P-value (Probability of chance) was equal or less than 0.05 considered as statistically significant to find for any association between the results variables.

Result: A total of 487 participants were included in the study and the rate of response was 92.7%. The highest percentage (66.3%) of study sample were full in the age group (21-30) years, and more than three quarters were lived in urban area. Nearly half of the study sample 47% had primary education and 60% those housewives, and the main source of information being family and friends (84.4%). As an overall assessment, 61.8% of the study sample had good knowledge and awareness about exclusive breastfeeding, with highly significant differences to education level ,occupation residence of the mother.

Conclusion: Over half of the subjects had good knowledge and awareness of exclusive Breastfeeding. And, on the other hand, there was a very significant difference between education level, occupation and mother's residence with a level of knowledge.

Keywords: *knowledge, Awareness, Exclusive breastfeeding, Karbala city.*

Background

Breast milk has the full nutritional requirements for health advancement that a baby needs. Additionally, it is safe and contains antibodies that help protect infants and boost immunity⁽¹⁾. Consequently, breastfeeding contributes to reduced infant morbidity and mortality due to diarrhea, respiratory or ear infections and other infectious diseases⁽²⁻⁴⁾, and for mothers, breast and ovarian cancer risk is reduced⁽⁵⁾. In addition, breastfeeding offers

societal economic and environmental benefits⁽⁶⁾. WHO recommends that children be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life to achieve optimum growth, development, and health. Children should then obtain complementary foods that are nutritionally adequate and healthy when continuing to the breast for up to two years or more⁽¹⁾. According to WHO and UNICEF "exclusive breastfeeding" is explained as "the infant receives only breast milk, no other liquids or solids are given – not even water – with the exception of oral rehydration

Mentions that there was a significant correlation between knowledge and delivery type, this can be because natural births are more likely to produce breast milk than cesareans, this result was similar to AL-Abedi, N. et al⁽¹⁰⁾. On the other hand, there was a non-significant relationship with Age groups, its disagree with AL-Azzawi, et al.,(2010), who stated that was a significant indicator between age of the mother and knowledge about EBF⁽¹⁸⁾.

Finally, figure (2) reveals the source of information of the study sample about EBF, the study indicates that the highest percentage 84.4% of participates in this study were received education about exclusive breastfeeding was from family and friends, " Since the majority of participated mothers had primary education, these low educational levels make them incapable to understand and comprehend the educational information in pamphlets, posters, and advanced media. So, they need to be educated about breastfeeding directly from family, friends or health workers, this means that the family plays an important role in successful breastfeeding", its approved with the result do it by Dallak, et al.,(2016), who reported that " the majority of the study sample educated by family and friends for exclusive breastfeeding"⁽¹²⁾.

Conclusions

There is an urgent necessity to provide accurate prenatal education that focuses on methods and long-term benefits for breastfeeding because mothers don't have inadequate awareness of exclusive breastfeeding from where (initiation, colostrum benefits, and breast and ovarian cancer incidence reduction). The study found a highly significant relationship between mother's knowledge and that residence, education level and occupation.

Ethical Clearance: All experimental protocols were approved under the Community Health Department and all experiments were carried out in accordance with approved guidelines.

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