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RELATIONSHIP OF EXCLUSIVE BREAST-FEEDING TO INFECTIONS AMONG SAUDI CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Background: Infectious disease is a leading cause of morbidity and hospitalization for infants and children. During infancy, breast-feeding protects against infectious diseases, particularly respiratory infections, gastrointestinal infections, and otitis media. **Objectives:** The study was designed to explore the effect of exclusive breast feeding (EBF) on reducing the risk of gastroenteritis and respiratory infections in comparison to artificial feeding among infants and children in Jeddah – KSA **Setting:** Well baby clinics and Pediatric clinics in the Primary Health Care Centers and Hospitals in Jeddah.

KEYWORDS: Out of 500 mothers of infants and preschool children studied.

PATIENTS AND METHODS

3000 Mothers of infants and preschool children aged between 15 to 45 years who attended Primary Health Care (PHC) Centers for child immunization surveyed during the period from February 2017 to April 2017. All mothers were subjected to questionnaire. Questionnaire included Questions related to date of birth, gender, birth order, consanguinity, socio-economic conditions, age of mother, level of education of mother, occupation, formula feeding or breast feeding, details of breast feeding (duration of exclusive breastfeeding weaning time), times of previous hospitalizations, incident of diarrhea and respiratory infections and frequency of antibiotic used. statistical methods were performed for statistical analysis using SPSS to examine associations of initiation, duration, exclusivity of breastfeeding, timing of supplementing breastfeeding with formula, and breast milk intensity with of infection (cold/upper respiratory tract, ear, throat, sinus, pneumonia/lung or gastroenteritis) and previous sick visits. The data were entered into a computer and processed

using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18. The Student -t test, Chisquare and Fisher exact test were performed appropriately. The level $p<0.05$ was considered as the cutoff value for significance.

RESULT

Out of 500 mothers of infants and preschool children studied, (55 %) were exclusively breast fed, while (45%) artificially feed.

Out of Breast Exclusive Breast Feed Infant no (30.71%) had episodes of diarrhea and no (25.71 %) had attacks of respiratory infections. The risk of gastroenteritis and respiratory infections was statistically significant higher when the mother had a high level of education ($p<0.077$). The diarrheal infection (72.50%) and respiratory infections (73.03%) were statistically significant higher among infants and children who were formula fed when compared to those who were exclusively breast fed, ($p<0.001$).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that breastfeeding protect against respiratory and gastrointestinal infections during infancy as well as early childhood.

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