
Impact of infant feeding pattern on child health

Entissar Mohamed El Shhar

-222- SUMMARY The study was carried to evaluate the impact of infant feeding pattern on child health. To reach this aim infants attending three MCH centres in Cairo representing three different zones with variable sociocultural and economic strata to study the effect of these factors on infant feeding pattern and consequently on child health. The study sample included 1033 infants subjected to cross sectional study and other group of 244 infants subjected to longitudinal study with 3 monthly examinations for five visits. The study included survey of the infant feeding pattern past and present, attitude of mother towards breast, artificial or mixed feeding, her ideas and attitude towards weaning and introduction of weaning foods. The socio cultural and economic standards of family which characterise the biological environment as well as the source of knowledge about infant feeding and how they get benefit from available medical services in the vicinity after this detailed survey, the infants were subjected to complete clinical examination and assessment of the nutritional status, then subjected to complete developmental assessment with evaluation of gross motor development, fine motor development, hand eye coordination, visual competence, hearing and speech and social behaviour-223-and play. AdraW-a-man test was done to assess mental development whenever feasible. These data were potentiated with anthropometric measurements to assess the physical growth. The results of this study revealed that the best environment for infants optimum physical, mental, and psychological development is to have a good mother, keen to breast feed her baby as long as possible giving him supplementary food within the digestible capacity of his gastrointestinal tract and of high nutritional value. To fulfill this target the mother must be prepared in early life to her future job as a mother with proper health education and above all to have economic facilities to apply health instructions without budgetary restrictions. A normal infant mother relationship in particular and normal family interrelationship in general help normal psychological development of the infant. The health status of the infants is the final outcome of many factors interacting with each other. These include, nutrition, infections, deficiency diseases, biologic characteristics of the environment. In this study some mothers of the studied infants coming from families of high income standards breastfed their babies from 6-12 month. They start supplementary feeding by the age of 4-5 months usually by yoghurt. In-224-case of scanty milk supply for any reason, these mothers give dried milk in supplementary or complementary fashion. These feeds are given in proper amount and dilution and usually under the supervision of a specialist. Home or commercial Biecosts of expensive type and of high nutritional value are used to

-supplement the milk feeding. It was noted that these mothers always support lactation by eating more additional food of high nutritional value. The health of their infants showed advanced parameters on developmental assessment. Cases of obesity were higher and PEM cases were lower among this group and if it occurred it was of the mild degree. The majority of mothers belonging to this group were from Heliopolis center. Mothers from low income families and those from moderate income families constituted the majority of mothers coming from the middle zone and south zone center respectively. These mothers used to breast feed their babies exclusively for one year or more and did not support lactation in most of the cases. Breast feeding was sometimes mixed with fresh fluid animal milk and dried milk. However these artificial feeds were used only in irregular and over diluted and underhygienic conditions. These feeds were supplemented by home or commercial Biekosts of 225-cheap variety like "Biscuits and RiRi" i.e of low nutritional value. Infants in this group have higher incidence of delayed parameters of development, increased incidence of PEM specially of the moderate and severe degrees, higher incidence of gastro intestinal infections and lower incidence of obesity. In addition to this higher morbidity rate, the mortality rate is also higher among this group of infants.