

A Study on Maternal Knowledge of Neonatal Danger Signs among Mothers Attending Child Welfare Clinics (CWC) in Piliyandala Medical Officer of Health (MOH) Area, Sri Lanka

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Early identification of danger signs of neonatal illness is essential to improve outcomes. Health seeking behaviours of mothers for neonatal illness is highly influenced by their knowledge. A descriptive epidemiology of maternal knowledge on neonatal danger signs is required to identify gaps and barriers for late health seeking behaviour and reduce the burden of neonatal morbidity and mortality.

A community based, descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to assess maternal knowledge on neonatal danger signs among mothers attending CWC in Piliyandala MOH area. Data was collected from August to November 2017. Participants were selected using convenient sampling method. Data collection was done using a pre-tested structured questionnaire. Pearson chi-square test was used to assess the relationship. Statistical significance was determined at 95% and the p=0.05, respectively.

294 mothers were enrolled in the study. Knowledge related to identification of danger signs was more than 90%. However, nearly 30% of mothers did not identify the 'going off feeds' and 'cold to touch' as danger signs. Overall, majority of the respondents i.e. 77.6% (228) had moderate knowledge of neonatal danger signs while 15% (no.) were highly knowledgeable, and 7.5% (no.) were poorly knowledgeable. The level of knowledge was associate with age of mother, type of family, and educational level of the mother.

Although the overall level of knowledge of neonatal danger signs was more than 90% among the mothers in the study sample, their knowledge on some common, yet early danger signs were not satisfactory. Going off feeds in a neonate is an ominous sign. It could be due to a variety of reasons, one of them being neonatal sepsis. Therefore, making mothers aware of this early sign which is easily detectable is worthwhile. Most mothers knew that a rise in body temperature of a neonate was a danger sign, but only 70.7% of mothers appreciated that the lowering of body temperature detected in the baby being cold to touch as a danger sign. Hypothermia makes a baby more vulnerable to multiple adverse neonatal outcomes and making mothers aware of this will help them to seek medical attention early.

Findings indicate the need to enhance education of mothers' knowledge related to the 'going off feeds' and 'cold to touch'. Further health education is required to enhance the knowledge on neonatal danger signs to those who have poor and moderate knowledge.

Key words: *Neonate, Danger signs, Maternal knowledge*