

Mothers and Low Birth Weight Infants: A Holistic Perspective

Dear Editor,

Low birth weight (LBW) contributes to 60–80% of all neonatal deaths. The global prevalence of LBW is 15.5%, which amounts to approximately 20 million LBW infants born each year, 96.5% of them in developing countries.^[1] Mother's level of knowledge on neonatal care and practice accordingly plays an important role in bringing down the mortality as well as the morbidity.^[2]

Keeping this in view a pilot study was undertaken to assess the knowledge of mothers regarding care of their LBW infants. Descriptive research design and consecutive sampling technique was used to select 60 mothers of LBW infants admitted in the neonatal ICU of a private hospital of Dist. Patiala, Punjab, India, from July to December 2015. Of 72 LBW infants admitted in neonatal ICU during this period, mothers of only 60 consented to be the part of this pilot study. Written informed consent from all research participants was obtained.

A structured knowledge questionnaire was used to collect the data, after prior permission from concerned authorities of hospital. Structured knowledge questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part A consisted of questions on demographic variables, that is, age, educational qualification, occupation, type of family, place of residence, and religion. Part B comprised of 45 knowledge-based multiple choice questions on areas of importance of exclusive breast feeding, kangaroo mother care, care related to handling and feeding the baby, importance of hygienic cord care and skin care, early recognition of danger signs, and prevention of infection among neonates. Every correct answer was awarded a score of 1 point and every wrong answer was assigned a 0 score. Maximum score was 45. The content validity of the questionnaire was approved by seven experts from the field of neonatology and community medicine and reliability of the tool was computed by applying split half method using Karl Pearson's coefficient correlation and Spearman brown prophecy formula and it came out to be 0.82.

Descriptive statistics were calculated. Results indicated that 57.70% mothers had average knowledge (i.e., scored 50–80% correct on structured knowledge questionnaire). Meanwhile, 42.30% had below average knowledge (scores below 50%). The relationship between knowledge scores and sociodemographic variables was tested by using *t*-test. Demographic variables, that is, age, place of residence, occupation, religion were not significantly related to knowledge of mothers regarding care of their LBW babies at $P > 0.05$ level whereas higher educational qualification and joint family system were significantly associated with enhancing the knowledge of mothers at $P < 0.001$ level. Similar results were found by Gundani and Mutowo, which

concluded that all the postnatal mothers had inadequate knowledge regarding LBW babies.^[3] Nurses in hospitals must provide comprehensive parent education program to not only mothers but also fathers regarding care of LBW infants.

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Conflicts of interest

Nothing to declare.

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