

FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION THROUGH CHANGE AGENTS TO REDUCE DIARRHOEAL MORBIDITIES IN YOUNG CHILDREN 6 MONTHS –3YEARS OF AGE RESIDING IN URBAN SLUM OF BARODA, INDIA

MINI SHETH, SWATI PARNAMI AND SURABHI ARORA

See end of article for authors' affiliations

Correspondence to :
MINI SHETH
Dept. of Food and Nutrition,
Faculty of Family and
Community Science,
The Maharaja Sayajirao
University of Baroda,
VADODARA (GUJARAT)
INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Objective of the study was to see the efficacy of the change agents selected from the community, in imparting Food Safety Education (FSE) to the mothers of children aged 6 months – 3years and bring about the reduction in the incidence of Diarrhoea. For the study five change agents were trained in five sessions to impart FSE to 50 mothers of young children. The post intervention survey revealed that 56% of the mothers were imparted education and to others leaflets and calendars were distributed bearing food safety messages. Based on this, mothers were divided into totally educated (group-I) and partially educated (group –II). FSE intervention through change agents brought about 35.7% (group-I) and 31.8% (group II) reduction in the prevalence of Diarrhoea. Many mothers had improved personal hygiene scores (42%). Most mothers could relate etiology of Diarrhoea to microbes ($P<0.05$). Also 42.8% of the mothers became particular about washing their hands prior to cooking and feeding their child. After FSEI group I mothers were able to associate environmental sanitation with child's health ($P<0.05$). Improvements were seen in the knowledge of the most group I mothers with respect to preparing Oral Re-hydration Solutions (ORS) and foods to be fed during Diarrhoea ($P<0.05$). A reduction in the total plate count, *S. aureus* and enterococci was seen in the hand rinse samples of mothers and children after FSEI. Face to face contact with mothers brought remarkable changes in existing KAP, whereas only distribution of any education material made little differences.

Key words : Diarrhoea, Food Safety Education, Change agents, Knowledge, Attitude and Practices, Oral Rehydration Solutions.

Infants and young children are highly susceptible to food borne diseases, and hence careful approach to their feeding practices becomes an important issue. Sheth *et al.*, (2000) reported high counts of *coliforms*, *S. aureus* and *AMCC* in all the raw as well as cooked weaning foods brought from an urban slum of Baroda. (Noterman *et al.*, 1994) Many of the food borne disease have “Diarrhoea” as a symptom. At least 40-50% of such disorders are caused by the microorganisms (*Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *Clostridium perfringens* *etc.*) which are almost exclusively transmitted by food or water (Sheth *et al.*, 2000). Every year more than 1.5 billion episodes of Diarrhoea occur in children of less than 5 years that result in over 3 million deaths. Seventy percent of these diarrhoeal episodes are due to the pathogens transmitted through food (WHO, 1998).

The knowledge and practices of mothers and other caretakers of the children are important determinants of diarrhoeal disease. Sheth *et al.*, 2000 suggested that the

potential risk factors leading to Diarrhoea were feeding leftover and overnight stored foods at an ambient temperature (28-35°C) to the children, not washing hands prior to cooking and feeding. Hence the key is to educate the parents especially the mothers about the preventive aspects of Diarrhoea (Noterman *et al.*, 1994). In order to bring about reduction in diarrhoeal morbidities of the young children in urban community, knowledge should be imparted to the mothers regarding safe child feeding practices. In this study an attempt was made to impart this knowledge by building the capacities of the change agents and thereafter evaluate the impact of imparting food safety messages on the diarrhoeal morbidities in the young children in the age group of 6 months - 3 years.

METHODOLOGY

Location of study area:

The city of Vadodara has a total population of approximately 13,92,000 of which 1/5th live in urban slum areas. (BMC record, 1999). Anganwadi centers of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) namely I, III and IV of Kalyannagar slum were selected for the study. Kalyannagar I, III and IV are far apart from each