

Impact of nutrition education on pregnant and lactating mothers

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ABSTRACT

The present work was under taken to study knowledge of the pregnant and lactating mothers regarding consumption of nutrients, and to evaluate changes in knowledge and practice status of the subjects due to nutrition education imparted to them. One hundred and fifty pregnant and lactating mothers with at least one living child were purposely selected. The nutrition education was provided to these subjects. The inferences were drawn with the help of suitable statistical tools, wherever felt necessary. Majority of the overall subjects had no knowledge of protein and vitamins at initial phase of the nutrition education. The change in knowledge status during post evaluation period was significant in illiterate mothers only. Insignificant changes in other educational categories indicated high level of pre-knowledge. Further, significant amelioration in knowledge and practice aspects (mean \pm SD scores) were observed due to nutrition education. These findings suggested significant impact of nutrition education imparted to the pregnant and lactating mothers.

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For the women of all races, reproduction involves considerable physiological stress as pregnancy, parturition and lactation make great nutritional demands on their bodies and are accomplished by additional health hazards (Anonymous, 1950, 1961). The nourishment of the mother before conception and during pregnancy is at utmost important for the delivery of a healthy baby. It has been reported that the babies conceived before and born during the hunger period are shorter and lighter in comparison to the counterparts receiving adequate nutrition. The infants born to the under nourished women have low vitality and poor resistance to infections due to inadequate supply of the nutrients by these mothers (Baijal and Sharma, 1992).

Improvements in income, diet and sanitary conditions ameliorate nutrition and health of the mothers and infants, and thereby maternal and infant mortalities are reduced (Swaminathan, 1971). Earlier studies conducted in Varanasi revealed consumption of deficient quantities of nutrients during pregnancy even in educated and 'well to do' families. Most probably, it happened due to misconceptions regarding nutritious diets and lack of nutritional knowledge in these mothers (Mohapatra *et al.*, 1993; Mridula, 2003).

In this perspective, the present study was undertaken to study knowledge of the pregnant and lactating mothers regarding consumption of nutrients and to evaluate changes in the knowledge and practice status of the subjects due to nutrition education imparted to them.

METHODOLOGY

One hundred and fifty pregnant and lactating mothers

with at least one live child, were purposely selected from four randomly selected villages of Harahua Community Development Block of Varanasi District (U.P.). The nutrition education was provided on various aspects of health care delivery, nutrients and nutritional requirements and feeding practices to the subjects. Various health education aids were utilized for thorough understanding of the content material.

Questionnaire-cum-Interview Technique was employed to collect the required information. Qualitative items were scored on scientific basis and finally mean and standard deviation were also worked out. Finally inferences were drawn with the help of appropriate statistical tools wherever felt necessary (Gupta and Srivastava, 1998; Garrelt, 1982).

Background information:

Majority of the subjects were illiterate house wife belonging to age more than 25 years, nearly one third mothers (31 per cent) belonged to upper castes, followed by scheduled caste group (24 per cent) and middle castes. The percentages of mothers in middle and scheduled caste group were almost similar. Further, one third mothers were from the families of per capita income below poverty line. The distribution of nuclear and joint families was almost equal.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is evident (Table 1) that majority of the overall subjects had no knowledge at all about protein (90.7%). There were only 6.0% subjects who reiterated that protein