Original Research Article

Awareness about mother and child health services among tribal women of reproductive age group in Kurnool division of Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Background: Maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity continue to be high in tribal areas despite the existence of various national programmes in India especially due to lack of awareness about MCH services among tribal women. This study was planned with the aim of assessing the knowledge of married tribal women of reproductive age group about MCH services.

Methods: This community based longitudinal study was carried out in January to June 2014 in Bairluti, tribal area at Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh. 168 married women of reproductive age group were selected by simple random sampling. All the participants were interviewed using a predesigned pretested semi structured questionnaire.

Results: Awareness about vitamin A supplementation, family planning temporary methods, birth waiting homes, JSY, 108 services was observed to be poor among participants. Awareness about postnatal services, institutional delivery, family planning permanent methods was found to be inadequate. Whereas more than 50% of the study subjects had knowledge regarding antenatal services, home delivery by trained person, complete immunization and feeding practices. Health workers and family members were the major source of information. Literacy status had statistically significant association with knowledge about MCH services. Statistically significant improvement in awareness is observed after educational intervention.

Conclusions: Knowledge of tribal women about MCH services was observed to be inadequate. Maternal literacy plays a key role in better utilization of MCH services. IEC activities with health education sessions will help to increase awareness.

Keywords: MCH services, Knowledge, Educational intervention, Tribal area

INTRODUCTION

Maternal mortality & morbidity are significant health problems in developing countries. Improving maternal health has been an essential element for achieving health for all & has been included in Millennium Developmental Goals.¹

Quality antenatal, intranatal, and postnatal care is the single most important determinant of infants as well as mothers morbidity and mortality. The inequality in the health and well-being of women in the developing world is a cause of immense concern. Despite an array of national programs since independence for improving the health of the child as well as the mother, inadequate access and underutilization of modern health services are among the prime reasons for the high maternal mortality rate in India. Other common reasons include high illiteracy among females, early marriages, ignorance, low quality as well as high cost of service, social structure,
detrimental health beliefs, personal characteristics, and malnutrition, especially among the rural and tribal populations. So, utilization of these services by the beneficiaries remains unsatisfactory.\textsuperscript{2,4}

Awareness of women regarding their health assumes special significance in the Indian context because the maternal health problems are mainly due to ignorance, poverty, and lack of knowledge regarding the issue. It is therefore very important to first focus on services for increasing the awareness level of the mother.\textsuperscript{5}

Thus this study was planned with the aim to assess the knowledge and awareness among the married tribal women of reproductive age group in Kurnool division of Kurnool district about MCH services. This will therefore help in identifying the lacunae in the awareness levels in antenatal care, new born and child care which can be related to the utilization of these services and hence contribute to bring down the mortality indicators.

Objectives

- To study the socio-demographic profile of married tribal women of reproductive age group.
- To assess the knowledge of married tribal women of reproductive age group about MCH services.
- To assess the impact of educational intervention on their knowledge regarding MCH services.

METHODS

This was a community based longitudinal and educational intervention study conducted in tribal area, Bairluti in Kurnool division of Kurnool district. The study subjects were married women of reproductive age group. 168 married women of reproductive age group between 15-45 years were selected using simple random technique. Data was obtained by personal interview using predesigned pretested semi structured questionnaire. House to house visit was done for the data collection. Informed verbal consent was taken from each participant. Group communication approach was followed for educational intervention. For reinforcement of their knowledge, educational intervention was conducted in three sessions with an interval of one month between the sessions by using flip charts, video shows, role plays, demonstrations. Each session lasted for three hours. Pretest & Posttest was done to assess their knowledge. The study period was 6 months, January to June 2014. The data entry and analysis was done using spss version 17 software. Results were presented as percentage of number of study subjects with correct responses. Chi-square test was used for comparison between the groups and p values were calculated.

RESULTS

Majority of the respondents i.e. 46% were between 25-34 years of age. Most of them were working as laborers (89%), Hindu by religion (91%) and belong to nuclear family (68%) and lower socio economic status (96%). Majority of them were illitertates (64%). Only 12% of them had secondary education (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio demographic characteristics of study group.

| Characteristics            | Frequency (n=168) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Age group (in years)       |                  |                |
| 15-24                      | 51               | 31             |
| 25-34                      | 78               | 46             |
| 35-44                      | 39               | 23             |
| Occupation                 |                  |                |
| Home maker                 | 18               | 11             |
| Working (labourer)         | 150              | 89             |
| Religion                   |                  |                |
| Hindu (chenchu)            | 153              | 91             |
| Others                     | 15               | 9              |
| Type of family             |                  |                |
| Joint                      | 54               | 32             |
| Nuclear                    | 114              | 68             |
| Literacy status            |                  |                |
| Illiterate                 | 108              | 64             |
| Read & write               | 7                | 4              |
| Primary                    | 33               | 20             |
| Secondary                  | 20               | 12             |
| Socioeconomic status       |                  |                |
| Lower middle               | 7                | 4              |
| Lower                      | 161              | 96             |

More than 50% of the literates were aware of antenatal, natal, postnatal services, immunization & birth registration services. Statistically significant association was found between literacy status of women and their awareness about MCH services (Table 2).

Regarding knowledge about MCH services it was observed that 55% of study subjects were aware of antenatal services whereas only 30% women knew about postnatal services. 38% of the participants were aware of institutional delivery and 58% women knew about home delivery by trained person.

Regarding the participants’ knowledge on family planning and immunization only 16% women knew about temporary methods of contraception and 31% women were aware of permanent methods of family planning. 61% of the respondents knew about complete immunization whereas only 7% women were aware of vitamin A supplementation.

The study subjects’ knowledge regarding feeding practices and other MCH services revealed that 63% women knew about feeding colostrum and 69% of the participants were aware of breast feeding immediately after delivery. Only 17% women knew about birth waiting home. 26% and 29% of the respondents were aware of JSY and 108 services respectively.
1% had knowledge about permanent methods of contraception. Radhika et al revealed that 62.5% of mothers had knowledge about permanent methods of contraception. Whereas in a study conducted by Radhika et al it was found that 47.5% of mothers had knowledge about temporary methods of contraception. Radhika et al revealed that 62.5% of mothers had knowledge about permanent methods of family planning.11

In the present study 55% of women had awareness about antenatal services. Radhika et al reported that 42.5% of the mothers had knowledge about minimum number of antenatal checkups required.11 Laishram et al revealed that 55.2% of respondents knew correctly the minimum antenatal checkup during pregnancy.12 Elayarani et al found that 37% women were aware of minimum three ante natal checkups.13

Present study observed that 30% of respondents had awareness about postnatal services. Whereas in a study conducted by Radhika et al it was found that 47.5% of mothers had knowledge about postnatal checkups.11 In the current study 38% of respondents had awareness about institutional delivery whereas 58% had knowledge about home delivery by trained person.

The present study found that 16% of the participants had awareness about temporary methods of contraception whereas 31% had knowledge about permanent methods of contraception. Radhika et al revealed that 62.5% of mothers had knowledge about permanent methods of family planning.11

Table 2: Association of literacy status with knowledge of respondents about MCH services.

| Characteristics                              | Illiterates (n=108) | Literates (n=60) | Chi-square (p value) |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Antenatal check ups                          | 43 (40)             | 49 (82)          | <0.01               |
| Postnatal check ups                          | 14 (13)             | 37 (62)          | <0.01               |
| Institutional delivery                       | 23 (21)             | 41 (68)          | <0.01               |
| Complete immunization                        | 55 (51)             | 47 (78)          | <0.01               |
| Family planning temporary methods            | 6 (6)               | 20 (33)          | <0.01               |
| Birth registration of infant                 | 7 (7)               | 35 (58)          | <0.01               |

Table 3: Awareness regarding MCH services before and after educational intervention.

| MCH services                              | Pre test  | Post test | Chi-square (p value) |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------------|
| Antenatal services                        | 92 (55)   | 150 (89)  | <0.01                |
| Postnatal services                        | 51 (30)   | 141 (84)  | <0.01                |
| Institutional delivery                    | 64 (38)   | 144 (86)  | <0.01                |
| Home delivery by trained health professional | 98 (58) | 146 (87)  | <0.01                |
| Family planning temporary methods         | 26 (16)   | 152 (91)  | <0.01                |
| Family planning permanent methods         | 52 (31)   | 155 (92)  | <0.01                |
| Complete immunization                     | 102 (61)  | 149 (89)  | <0.01                |
| Vitamin A supplementation                 | 12 (7)    | 158 (94)  | <0.01                |
| Colostrum feeding                         | 106 (63)  | 148 (88)  | <0.01                |
| Breast feeding immediately after delivery  | 116 (69)  | 154 (92)  | <0.01                |
| Birth waiting home                        | 28 (17)   | 142 (85)  | <0.01                |
| 108 services                              | 49 (29)   | 148 (88)  | <0.01                |
| JSY                                        | 44 (26)   | 152 (91)  | <0.01                |

Statistically significant improvement in awareness was observed after educational intervention (Table 3).

Our study found that maternal educational level is a significant factor in determining the knowledge of MCH services. Literacy status had statistically significant association with knowledge about MCH services. This finding is consistent with other studies.6-10

DISCUSSION

Majority of the respondents i.e. 46% were between 25-34 years of age. Most of them were working as laborers (89%), Hindu by religion (91%) and belong to nuclear family (68%) and lower socio economic status (96%). Majority of them were illiterates (64%). Only 12% of them had secondary education.

Health workers and family members were the major source of information. Past experience plays an important role whereas contribution of peers and media is poor (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Source of information.

In the present study 55% of women had awareness about antenatal services. Radhika et al reported that 42.5% of the mothers had knowledge about minimum number of antenatal checkups required.11 Laishram et al revealed that 55.2% of respondents knew correctly the minimum antenatal checkup during pregnancy.12 Elayarani et al found that 37% women were aware of minimum three ante natal checkups.13

Our study found that maternal educational level is a significant factor in determining the knowledge of MCH services. Literacy status had statistically significant association with knowledge about MCH services. This finding is consistent with other studies.6-10

Present study observed that 30% of respondents had awareness about postnatal services. Whereas in a study conducted by Radhika et al it was found that 47.5% of mothers had knowledge about postnatal checkups.11 In the current study 38% of respondents had awareness about institutional delivery whereas 58% had knowledge about home delivery by trained person.
The current study revealed that 61% of the study subjects had knowledge about complete immunization whereas only 7% had awareness about vitamin A supplementation. In a study conducted by Elayarani et al it was found that very few mothers were aware of names of the vaccines (BCG 15%, DPT 10%, OPV 7%. Measles 4% & Hep B 2%) and not a single mother knew about Vit A. Rama et al revealed that 76% of the participants were not aware of the names of the individual vaccines given for the newborn babies.

In the present study it was revealed that 63% of the participants had awareness about feeding colostrums and 69% had knowledge about breast feeding immediately after delivery. Radhika et al stated that 45% of mothers had knowledge about initiation of breast feeding within hr. after delivery. Elayarani et al reported that 49.48% of mothers were aware that breast feeding is started in first one hour of birth. Rama et al found that 48% of mothers knew that breast feeding should start within 1 hr of child birth.

In the current study it was found that 17% of the respondents had knowledge about birth waiting home whereas 26% had awareness about JSY and 29% knew about 108 services.

This study result shows that awareness about vitamin A supplementation, family planning temporary methods, birth waiting homes, JSY, 108 services was observed to be poor among participants. Awareness about postnatal services, institutional delivery, family planning permanent methods was found to be inadequate. Whereas more than 50% of the study subjects had knowledge regarding antenatal services, home delivery by trained person, complete immunization and feeding practices. Statistically significant improvement in awareness was found after educational intervention.

Health workers and family members played a major role in providing information. Media and peers had been found to be ineffective in spreading awareness. Other studies had mentioned anganwadi worker and health facilities as main source of information on mother and child care.

**CONCLUSION**

Knowledge about MCH services was found to be inadequate in the study area. Knowledge of tribal women was found to be associated with literacy status. Statistically significant improvement in awareness was found after educational intervention. To improve community awareness on MCH services information, education and communication activities should be increased through community campaign and mass media like local television channel, radio and local newspapers. There is a need to motivate women to utilize maternal and child care services which are freely available in all the government health setups.

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