

PP 101

Knowledge and practice regarding postnatal care among postnatal mothers in Wadduwa Medical Officer of Health area

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Background: Postnatal period is the most vulnerable period in the lives of mothers. Knowledge and practice regarding postnatal care is important to reduce complications, illnesses, disabilities and even deaths of mothers and newborns.

Objective: To assess knowledge, practice and associated factors regarding postnatal care among postnatal mothers in Wadduwa Medical Officer of Health (MOH) area, Kalutara District.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out with conveniently selected 100 postnatal mothers who were attending clinics in Wadduwa MOH area between October and November 2020; using a pre-tested, interviewer-administered questionnaire which consisted of main aspects of postnatal care. Data were analyzed using SPSS software version 26.0. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation) were calculated and Chi-square test was employed. When analysing knowledge and practice, postnatal care scores were ranked using an in-house method as poor, moderate, and good, if the total <50%, between 50% and 75%, and >75% respectively. Significance was considered as $p < 0.05$.

Results: The majority of participants were Sinhala Buddhists (88.0%), married (98.0%) and primiparous mothers (54.0%). Mean age was 29.3 ± 4.9 years. Among 100 participants, 51.0% and 49.0% had moderate and good level of knowledge respectively regarding postnatal care, while 81.0% and 19.0% had good and moderate levels of practice regarding postnatal care. A significant association was found between level of knowledge and level of education ($p < 0.001$), employment status ($p < 0.001$), monthly income ($p < 0.001$) and parity ($p < 0.001$). Further, level of practice was associated with educational level ($p = 0.00$), employment status ($p < 0.001$), monthly income ($p < 0.001$), parity ($p < 0.001$), number of antenatal sessions participated ($p < 0.001$) and number of home visits ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: Most postnatal mothers had a good level of practice, and a moderate level of knowledge regarding postnatal care. Improving knowledge by conducting more educational sessions focused on areas on postnatal care found to be lacking during antenatal visits is recommended.