

Abstract

Objective

To assess the effectiveness and feasibility of on the job staff training and supportive supervision to improve six months Exclusive Breastfeeding (EBF).

Methods

A longitudinal study was conducted in a public health field practice area-Sri Lanka in 2006–2007. Three breastfeeding counseling sessions were conducted for public health midwives. Supportive supervision and on the job training were done by two public health physicians. Pre and post intervention independent cross sectional studies were conducted to assess the effectiveness of the programme. The study sample consisted of mother-infant pairs where infants were aging 6 to 12 months, attending child welfare clinics. Primary outcome measure was the proportion of infants who received EBF up to 6 months. Logistic regressing model was used for analysis of predictors of EBF.

Results

Study sample consisted of 336 mother-infant pairs (pre 139, post 197). Proportion of mothers who breastfed their infants exclusively for six months improved from 19% to 70% after the intervention. The median duration of EBF increased from 4 months to 6 months (inter-quartile range 2–6 and 5–6 months respectively). Unconfounded effect of intervention on 6 months EBF in logistic regression model was highly significant (OR=13.67, $p<0.001$). Intervention significantly reduced the bottle feeding rate (OR=0.212, $p<0.001$) but not formula feeding (OR=1.146, $p=0.642$). Of potential predictors assessed. Sinhalese mothers than Muslim mothers (OR=3.37, $p<0.001$) and employed mothers compared to housewives (OR=4.45, $p=0.014$) were more likely to breastfeed their infants upto six months. Parity, maternal education and maternal age were not significantly associated with six months EBF.

Conclusions

The existing public health infrastructure can be used effectively to improve six months EBF in places where the care is given primarily by public health system.