ABSTRACT

Although ever breast-feeding rate is high in Vietnam, exclusive breast-feeding rate is still low, especially in some areas in the south of Vietnam.

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to examine breast-feeding practices and factors related to breast-feeding practices in Benluc district, Longan province, Vietnam. One hundred and sixty four mothers who had the last child under two years were face-to-face interviewed in the community to collect information regarding breast-feeding practice. Kinds of liquid or food provided to their infant during the first four months of life were reported to determine the proportion of exclusive breast-feeding.

The results of this study revealed that the exclusive breast-feeding rate for at least 4 months was only 4.9%, clearly lower than those rates of nation and province – 29% and 30.2%, respectively. In the first months after delivery, 53.4% of babies received plain water and 25.0% received infant formula. Mean age for starting other liquids, milk or foods was 25 days and mean duration of breast-feeding was 13.64 months. Discarding colostrum is still a misconception in this area (20.8%). There was an association between duration of breast-feeding and occupation of mothers, (p < 0.05). Psychological factors of mothers and family encouragement provided positive supports for breast-feeding practice. Health system supports including antenatal care education and encouragement of early breast-feeding starting, immediately or within one hour, after delivery, played a significant role in breast-feeding success. Early introduction of other milk or foods within the first four months of life also significant participated in shortening of breast-feeding duration, (p < 0.01). Some findings had not clearly determined actual relationship between breast-feeding practice and factors.

Since giving water is normal behavior in traditional feeding pattern in Vietnam, successful interventions should have been implemented for mothers and mothers-in-law through community counselors. Psychological factor, family encouragement and health care support which affected to breast-feeding practice in this study suggested the key role of health care providers in counseling during antenatal and postnatal care.