

Beliefs and Practices of Antenatal Mothers in a Rural Setting: a survey by students of D.C.H. Nsg.

As a part of course curriculum a survey was conducted by the ninth batch of students of Diploma in Community Health Nursing of Regional Teacher/P.H. Nurses' Training School, Singur, Hooghly, West Bengal, in a village to find out the 'Beliefs and Practices of Antenatal Mothers'. Given below is a report on the study .

Introduction

Every society has its own traditional beliefs and practices related to health care. Beliefs in supernatural powers, i.e. God, beliefs in holy rituals, salvation, offerings and sacrifices are applied at different stages of life from birth to death. Pregnancy in the case of a woman, is the midpoint of life and death. Therefore, there are many such practices, rituals, beliefs and offerings which are meant to protect a mother from influences of evil spirits and supernatural powers.

People have taken pleasure in using traditional beliefs and practices for a long time and got used to it. Thus it can be made easily acceptable something that has been given by the faith healer to the community. Some practices are effective whereas others may be harmful or ineffective. These beliefs and practices are linked to culture, environment and education. Health workers must have concern for the community's cultural values and beliefs so that they can utilize the harmless practices for effective use as well as eliminate harmful practices.

This survey was conducted among mothers who had children from birth to three years or were currently pregnant. This village is very small with a population of only 212. For the survey 12 mothers were selected from that village.

Objectives

1. To know the utilization of health care facilities during antenatal period, specially health check-up, immunization and diet.
2. To find out the prevalence of performance of religious ceremonies during pregnancy.
3. To find out beliefs and practices and superstitions related to pregnancy.

Findings

Background Data

Table I.: Distribution of mothers according to educational status (N=12)

Educational Status	Number
Illiterate	9
Primary Standard	3

It was seen from Table I most of the mothers, i.e., 9 out of 12, were illiterate

Table II.: Distribution of families according to economic status (N=12)

Economic Status	Number of families
Debt	6
Manage	5
Save	1

Table II showed that only five families maintained the balance of expenditure for their livelihood and only one family saved some amount money.

Table III.: Distribution of age at marriage among the selected mothers (N=12)

Age of marriage in years	Numbers
13-15	8
15-18	3
18 and above	1

Table III demonstrated the eleven mothers were married before 18 years of age and one mother above 18 years.

Table IV.: Distribution of mothers according to their ages of their children (N=12)

Ages of children	Numbers
Birth to one year	5
1 year to 2 years	4
2 years to 3 years	3

Out of 12 mothers one mother was pregnant during the survey. Table IV indicated that many mothers had children below 3 years of age

Table V

Number of pregnancies	Numbers of mothers
Once	3
Twice	2
Thrice	2
More than 3	5

Table V indicated that five mothers out of 12 were pregnant more than three times.

Table VI showed that 11 mothers came for monthly checkup at the sub-centre and received tetanus toxoid also. One mother did not utilize any health facilities .

Objective No.1.

Utilisation of Health Facilities

Table VI.:Antenatal Check up of mothers during antenatal period

Antenatal check up	Sub-centre	P.H.C	Hosp.	Private practitioners	Nowhere
Monthly	11	-	-	-	
Twice a month	-	-	-	-	1
Weekly	-	-	-	-	
Total	11	-	-		1

Table VII.:Distribution of mothers regarding different food stuff during antenatal period

Types of food stuff	No. of mothers
Milk	1
Vegetables	1
Fruits and milks	2
Dal	1
All types of food	1
No addition of any food	6

Table VII revealed that six mothers did not add any food stuff during antenatal period and half of the mothers added some kind of food

Objective No. 2

Performance of religious ceremony during antenatal period

Table VIII.: Performance of Socio-religious functions during pregnancies

*Saddah	Number
Done	5
Not done	7

*Saddah: A pregnant women at five, seven and eight months of pregnancy is felicitated by her relatives who perform rituals like offering new clothes and various types of food. It performed only for one day.

For five mothers one socio religious function, saddah, was performed by their relatives during pregnancies for seven mothers it was not performed.

Obective No 3.

Beliefs and Practices

Discussion and conclusion

Twelve mothers were interviewed with respect to antenatal care, diet during pregnancy, socio-religious functions, beliefs and practices during antenatal period by a door-to-door survey.

This survey revealed that in this rural community most of the mothers had a low educational standard and belonged to low socioeconomic groups. The maximum number of mothers got married in early age and many mothers had got more than three pregnancies. Six mothers recognised that addition of foodstuff was required in this period but six mothers did not recognise that. There were no such harmful beliefs or practices which could affect an antenatal mother. Co-existence between traditional beliefs and dependency on health services were found in that community. Mothers utilized sub-centre services like check-up and immunization. Gradually, their attention has to be diverted towards scientific practices.

Saddah ceremony can be utilized for introduction of additional food throughout the pregnancy and this practice should be the focus of the health education on antenatal diet. If various types of food are continued for the whole pregnancy period it will give a significant value to the health of the mother and baby

Distribution of Mothers having Beliefs and Practices Related to Pregnancy.

Table IX

Types of belief and practices	Practices(No of mothers)	No practices(No of mothers)
Manath (voluntary promises of a sacrifices to deity)	7	5
Holding of "Tabis" & "Kabaj" (defensive amulets are used to protect from an evil spirit or from the wrath of god)	7	5
Not worshipping god	9	3
Not wearing new clothes	7	5
Not going in front of dead bodies or a funeral ceremony	8	4
Not seeing the face of a seterile mother there or widow early morning	6	6

(From Table IX it was indicated that all mothers practiced some kind of rituals and in many cases one mother practised more than one ritual)

References

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