

Assessment of mothers' knowledge about factors related to feeding their infants with cleft lip/palate

W.M.P.S.K. Wijekoon^{1*}, H.M.T.D.K. Herath², K. Rathnayaka², T. Dissanayake² and R. Mahendran³

¹*Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka,* ²*Department of Oral Medicine and Peridontology, Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka,* ³*Smile Train Project, Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*
**pwijekoon@yahoo.com*

Cleft of the lip and / or palate are common birth defects of complex aetiology. Children born with these deformities have a range of functional problems in feeding which leads to failure in weight gain. Additionally, mother's awareness and advice given by health care providers play a major role in overcoming feeding difficulties in children with clefts. This study was aimed at assessing the mothers' knowledge about factors related to feeding their children with clefts attending the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic, Dental Hospital, Peradeniya.

This cross-sectional observation study was carried out among a random sample of fifty four eligible mothers whose infants had cleft lip/palate attending the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic, Dental Hospital, Peradeniya from September 2015 to January 2016. An interviewer administered pre-tested and validated questionnaire was used to collect data. Questions were mainly aimed at assessing knowledge on general and specific feeding practices. Questions were further grouped into breast feeding, weaning, complementary feeding and growth and development of the child.

Nearly fifty percent of mothers of cleft children had received advice regarding feeding either from a doctor, nurse, midwife or a cleft centre. Most of them (64.8%) received instructions from a cleft centre. Over two thirds of the mothers were aware of the general health (sleeping duration, gradual growth increase, inter-current infection and growth failure) of the infant and general feeding guidelines on breast feeding, weaning and the importance of a balanced diet. On the contrary, 57.4% and 55.6% of mothers were not aware that burping the infant with oral cleft must be done during and after feeding and other than water and thin fluid no junk food should be given in between meals respectively.

In conclusion, creating awareness in mothers of infants with clefts on special factors such as burping and complementary feeding needs improvement with simultaneous monitoring of weight gain. It is important that all health caregivers are well aware of the feeding instructions that have to be given to mothers with cleft babies.