

ABSTRACT

Objective: Breastfeeding is highly beneficial to both mothers and infants and these benefits are recognized by many of the world's leading health organizations involved in infant and young child nutrition. The objectives of this study are to assess the relationship between knowledge, attitudes and beliefs and the intention to breastfeed of pregnant women and to identify the major concerns pregnant women have related to breastfeeding.

Methods: This study was conducted at two health institutions in La Romaine, Trinidad between March and April 2010. A convenient sample of 50 pregnant women attending prenatal clinics contributed to the study. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire which included questions related to demographics, intention to breastfeed and knowledge, attitudes and beliefs regarding breastfeeding. The results were analyzed statistically to determine how knowledge, attitudes and beliefs affected the participants' intention to breastfeed.

Results: Forty – six percent of the participants planned to breastfeed and use infant formula, 34% planned to exclusively breastfeed and 16% did not intend to breastfeed at all. Four percent were undecided as to what method of feeding they would use. The health benefits of breastfeeding were the least known among the women. The main reasons given for not intending to breastfeed were that breastfeeding was too time consuming or too complicated and painful and that the participants were generally uncomfortable with the idea of breastfeeding. Most of the participants were concerned that they would not produce enough breast milk to satisfy their infant's hunger and were uncomfortable with breastfeeding in public.

Conclusion: Intention to breastfeed is affected by a combination of factors related to knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. There is a need to educate women about the health benefits

of breastfeeding and the recommendations on exclusive breastfeeding. Interventions are also needed to positively affect the attitudes of women regarding quantity of breast milk produced and the public's attitude with respect to breastfeeding in public and the need for breastfeeding facilities at the workplace.