

FACTORS INFLUENCING BREASTFEEDING AMONG WOMEN IN SOUTH TRINIDAD.

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2010

Background: The drive for breastfeeding is a global priority because of its many long and short term benefits to infant, mother and the society in general. The benefits include adequate and appropriate nutrition; protection against infections; cognitive development in childhood; emotional well being, economic benefits; spacing of pregnancies; quicker return to pre-pregnancy weight and protection from breast and ovarian cancers. Many factors influence the choice of breastfeeding practises. Those that were identified in the study were personal, social, cultural, facilities and environmental factors.

Objective: To identify the factors that influence breastfeeding among women attending three postnatal clinics in south Trinidad.

Design: Seventy women attending three postnatal clinics located at 31 from Marabella, 10 La Romaine and 29 Roy Joseph in the county Victoria, south Trinidad were identified to participate in the study. Convenience samples of breastfeeding mothers were derived from the clinics. The research instrument was a self administered questionnaire. Descriptive analysis such as frequencies and percentages, cross – tabulations and chi- square test have been used in the data analyses.

Results: Personal, social, local facilities and environment, as well as cultural factors were noticed to have both an enhancing and inhibiting effect on mothers' breastfeeding decisions. There were no significance with breastfeeding knowledge with age, education and occupation, among mothers in the three health centres.

Conclusions: It is evident that mothers who participated in this study are familiar with the breastfeeding practices; however there is need for further information to be given to remove some of the fallacies they follow.

