

## TIMELY INITIATION OF BREASTFEEDING AND PRE-LACTEAL FEEDING RATES IN HOSPITAL DELIVERED BABIES IN INDIA AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS

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**Background and aims:** The rate of initiation of breastfeeding within an hour of birth (timely initiation) continues to remain low in India and the practice of giving pre-lacteal feed is still prevalent. We determined the rates of timely initiation and pre-lacteal feeds to newborns delivered at urban tertiary hospital.

**Methods:** Within a day of delivery, 500 women who delivered live births at a tertiary care hospital underwent a verbal interview to collect socio-demographic and clinical information on a pre-tested standardized questionnaire. The study outcomes were timely initiation of breastfeeding and pre lacteal feed defined as administration of “Ghutti”, honey, water, other milk to the newborn before initiation of breast feeding.

**Results:** Timely initiation and pre-lacteal feed rates were 36.4% and 16.9% respectively. Factors improving timely initiation were maternal education [2, 95% CI (3.6, 1.1)], counseling on breastfeeding during antenatal visits [3.6 (6.2, 2)] and gestational age [1.2 (1.4, 1.0)]; while factors delaying timely initiation were obstetric problems [3.5 (1.7, 7.2)] and caesarean deliveries [37.6 (17.4, 81.1)]. Factors significantly associated with pre-lacteal feed were maternal education [0.5 (0.2, 0.9)], muslim religion [2.3 (1.2, 4.4)] and delivery by caesarean section [2.56 (1.56, 4.19)]. There was a significant association between failure to timely initiate and pre-lacteal feed ( $p=0.00$ ).

**Conclusion:** Increase in timely initiation rates and prohibition of pre-lacteal feed can be achieved by proper antenatal counseling of pregnant women and revitalizing the baby friendly hospital initiative.