

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The present study was descriptive research which aimed at investigating the duration and rate of breastfeeding of postpartum mothers during the first four months after delivery and exploring factors related to breastfeeding of postpartum mothers who gave birth at Maharaj Nakhon Si Thammarat Hospital whose infants were four to six months old based on the PRECEDE Framework. The sample of the study consisted of 400 postpartum mothers who gave birth at Maharaj Nakhon Si Thammarat Hospital and who brought their four-to-six-month-old infants to receive vaccination at the ten Primary Care Units under the network of Maharaj Nakhon Si Thammarat Hospital from July1 to August31, 2003.

The research instruments were composed of 1) the questionnaire eliciting demographic data, breastfeeding practices, knowledge about breastfeeding practices, attitudes toward breastfeeding practices, and support for breastfeeding practices; 2) observations of public health officials' activities to support breastfeeding practices; and 3) a focus group discussion conducted with postpartum mothers regarding problems and obstacles in breastfeeding practices. The data were subsequently analyzed as follows:

In the present study, duration and rate of breastfeeding practices were studied. Also, the study covered predisposing factors (the mother factors), enabling factors (the mother and infant factors), and reinforcing factors (support for breastfeeding practices). In addition, the relationship between breastfeeding practices and predisposing factors, enabling factors, and reinforcing factors was determined using the Chi-square test.

The research findings can be concluded as follows:

1. In terms of predisposing factors, it was found that more than half of the subjects (52.3%) were between 21 and 30 years old, with the mean age of 28.37 years. Moreover, the majority (87.0%) were Buddhists, and close to half (45.0%) completed High school education. About half (50.2%) were housewives, and two-thirds of the subjects (64.7%) worked at home. In terms of income, 42.3% of the subjects had a monthly income between 5,001 and 10,000 baht, with the mean income of 8,521.38 baht per month. Most of the subjects (91.8%) had an intention to breastfeed their infants, and more than half (61.0%) planned to breastfeed. Finally, 56.0% had a high level of knowledge about breastfeeding practices, and 64.8% had a moderate attitude toward breastfeeding practices.
2. As regards enabling factors, it was found that 62.0% of the subjects completed ante-natal care, and about one-third (38.2%) received ante-natal care at Maharaj Nakhon Si Thammarat Hospital. The majority of the subjects (90.7%) received sufficient advice on breastfeeding, and 70.5% of them had normal labour. Furthermore, 91.0% had normal

nipples, and 51.7% had no previous experience of breastfeeding. Finally, 94.3% were healthy, 81.3% did not have history of illness, 96.3% did not receive medication during pregnancy, and 96% did not have health problems during the first four months after delivery. When it came to the infant factors, their birth weights ranged from 2,500 to 3,500 grams and the current weights ranged from 5,500 to 6,500 grams. Almost all of the babies (95.3%) had no health problem after birth, and 84.0% had no health problem during the first four months after birth. Finally, more than half (56.3%) were exclusively during their hospital stay, while a little more than one-quarter (27.1%) were exclusively breastfed for at least four months after hospital discharge.

3. With regard to reinforcing factors related to support from family members, others, and medical and public health personnel, about two-thirds of the subjects (67.8%) received a moderate level of support.
4. When considering breastfeeding practices of postpartum mothers during the first four months after delivery, it was found that the largest group, or 26.5%, exclusively breastfed their infants for one month, and 20.5% exclusively breastfed their infants for four months. About two-third of the postpartum mothers (64.3%) had not weaned their infants yet. As for those who had already weaned, one-third or 35.6% had weaned for one month. The reasons for weaning were having to work outside their home and had little lactation (37.7% and 33.7%, respectively).
5. The predisposing factors which were significantly associated with the postpartum mothers' breastfeeding practices during the first four months

based on the Chi-square test were the postpartum mothers' occupation (p-value = 0.015), workplace (p-value < 0.001), and intention to breastfeed (p-value = 0.032). On the other hand, the predisposing factors which were not statistically significantly related to breastfeeding practices were age, religion, education, monthly family income, knowledge of breastfeeding, attitudes toward breastfeeding, and plan to breastfeed.

6. The enabling factors which were statistically significantly associated with breastfeeding practices during the first four months after delivery based on the Chi-square test were experience with breastfeeding practices (p-value = 0.037), characteristics of the nipple (p-value = 0.020), the current weight of the infants (p-value = 0.009), and type of formula/milk received during the hospital stay (p-value < 0.001). On the other hand, the enabling factors which were not statistically significantly related to breastfeeding practices were ante-natal care, place of ante-natal care, type of delivery, health status of mothers during pregnancy, health problems of mothers during the first four months after delivery, health problems of infants at birth, and infants' birth weight.
7. The reinforcing factor related to support for breastfeeding practices was not statistically significantly associated with breastfeeding practices during the first four months as shown by the Chi-square test.

Recommendations

The present study emphasized the significance of exclusive breastfeeding for at least four months after delivery. According to World Health Organization, during the first four to six months after birth, infants should be exclusively breastfed. This is also a policy imposed by the Ministry of Public Health. However, in this study, it was found that only 20.5% of the subjects exclusively breastfed their infants for at least four months, which was far from the goal. In addition, it was found that about two-thirds (64.3%) had not weaned, but they breastfed their infants together with other nutritional substances. Also, the period in which the largest group of subjects (35.6%) stopped breastfeeding their infants was one month after childbirth due to working responsibility outside home and insufficient lactation. In fact, these two reasons could have been prevented if the mothers' readiness had been prepared since pregnancy and follow-up at home had been conducted as they were key factors leading to success in breastfeeding. Based on these findings, the following recommendation could be made:

1. For public health officials' practice

Training should be conducted with all public health officials in the operational level to enable them to develop their full potential and to ensure that they have correct practice, attitudes, and knowledge of breastfeeding. They should be able to transfer the knowledge and skills related to breastfeeding practices to postpartum mothers through teaching and demonstration to help postpartum mothers solve their problems and to increase their level of confidence to achieve success in breastfeeding. The highlight of each period should be as follows:

Ante-natal period The staff need to be aware of the significance of breastfeeding and able to give correct knowledge and demonstration. They should also be able to find solutions in case of abnormal nipple. Pregnant women should be provided with a chance to visit and talk to postpartum mothers who are breastfeeding their babies to instill positive attitudes toward breastfeeding in them.

Delivery period The staff should encourage postpartum mothers to touch and hold their babies within half an hour after delivery to ensure early bonding and early sucking within one hour. If the babies suck correctly and often enough, the mothers would lactate sufficiently. This will also stimulate the mothers' love and spiritual bonding with their infants, increasing the chance that they would exclusively breastfeed for longer than four months.

Postpartum period The staff should provide the postpartum mothers with opportunity to plan for breastfeeding and prepare their readiness before the hospital discharge. They should be taught and demonstrated on how to practice breastfeeding and how to solve problems and overcome obstacles in practicing breastfeeding. In fact, family members and relatives should also be included in the training as they may need to assist the postpartum mothers when they have to return to their work outside their home. The postpartum mothers should be confident in their ability to breastfeed their infants before they are discharged from the hospital.

Follow-up period The staff should be advisers who can give correct advice to postpartum mothers. They should not emphasize only the benefits of breastfeeding but

also stress the appropriate period of breastfeeding, methods, and solutions to problems. In addition to this, they should continuously pay the postpartum mothers a visit at home to help them overcome obstacles which can help increase their confidence and power practice breastfeeding with success.

2. Government's policy

As the government has come up with a policy stating that at least 30.0% of postpartum mothers should practice breastfeeding exclusively for at least four months after delivery, the working conditions, both in the public and private sectors, should be adjusted to facilitate this. At present, both public and private employers grant only a three-months maternity leave. Thus, the length of the leave should be extended or the policy should be adjusted to comply with the actual situation. Furthermore, workplaces should prepare facilities to support mothers who want to breastfeed their infants in the offices, and they should set up a childcare center in the workplace to enable the postpartum mothers to work simultaneously with practicing breastfeeding.

3. Cooperation from community

Campaigns should be organized to disseminate values and benefits of breastfeeding to promote breastfeeding through media such as television, radio, or news announcement center in the community. Moreover, postpartum mothers who are successful with breastfeeding should be publicized, and model mothers should be sought to promote breastfeeding in the community. In addition to this, a childcare center should be established in the community to provide care to infants who feed on their mothers' breast milk while the mothers are working so as to ensure successful breastfeeding.

4. Education

The content related to breastfeeding should be included in the curricula for medical and nursing students to ensure positive attitudes and awareness needed to promote breastfeeding and to offer good role models. Furthermore, the content related to breastfeeding should be included in the school curriculum to ensure that teachers and students have appropriate knowledge, attitudes, and practice of breastfeeding so that they can practice and transfer the knowledge to others.

Recommendations for Further Researches

1. A cohort study should be conducted with the subjects who exclusively breastfeed their infants during hospitalization to follow-up on exclusive breastfeeding for at least four months.
2. Detailed data concerning support from family members and breastfeeding support groups in the community should be gathered.
3. In-depth qualitative studies should also be carried out to shed more light on problems and obstacles mothers face when breastfeeding their infants.
4. The effective intervention programs to promote breastfeeding should be studied for different groups of lactation mothers.

Based on these recommendations, the researcher has designed and proposed a project for Maharaj and Hornaliga Primary Care Units which is expected to lead to promotion of exclusive breastfeeding for at least four months after delivery to be utilized by Maharaj Nakhon Si Thammarat Hospital and the Primary Care Units under the hospital's network—The Project to Promote Preparation of Mothers and Relatives to Support Exclusive Breastfeeding for at least Four Months of Maharaj Nakhon Si Thammarat Hospital” (see Appendix F).