

Feeding Practices In Icds and Non-Icds Areas :

Some Observations In An Oldest Project

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Introduction :

ICDS Scheme, launched in India in 1975-76, is perhaps one of the largest child development programmes in the world. Active community intervention for a qualitative change in child rearing practices has been intensely advocated during recent decades and with health and nutritional education for 15-45 years women, ICDS is supposed to play a big role in it. Fortunately breast feeding is universally practised maternal norm in our country and that too for quite a long period but weaning is the area causing lot of concern.

As a part of a series of detailed community investigations, this study was conducted in Dalmau block (Dist. Rae Bareilly, U.P.), one of the oldest projects in our country, to compare the feeding practices in ICDS and non-ICDS areas to take a view of schemes impact in terms of change in child rearing habits.

Material & Methods :

These observations were recorded in ICDS block Dalmau and an adjoining Non-ICDS block Lalganj of Distt. Rae Bareilly (U.P.) while conducting a detailed study on impact of ICDS. Study area Dalmau is one of the oldest project in India where ICDS scheme was started in 1975-76, Adjoining block Lalganj was selected as control area because it is similar to Dalmau in social, anthropological and geographical aspects and welfare services available to community except the ICDS. Mothers of 214 children from three randomly selected villages of Dalmau block and 205 children from three randomly selected villages of Lalganj block were interviewed regarding total duration of breast feeding and age at weaning. Total duration of breast feeding was referred to a period till the child was put on the breast, which could be in addition to other food stuff. The data was recorded on a pretested schedule.

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Observations and Discussion :

In ICDS group there was only one child (0.47%) out of 214 children and in Non-ICDS group there were three children (1.46%) out of 205 children, with no breast feeding at all. In most of the children of both the groups, the total duration of breast feeding was ranging from 12 to 23 months

(ICDS = 72.29%, Non-ICDS = 74.25%). 10.33% children in ICDS group and 9.90% children in Non-ICDS group were having total duration of breast feeding 24 months and above. These differences between the two groups were not found to be significant statistically. Mean duration of breast feeding in ICDS and Non-ICDS groups was 16.34 and 16.76 months respectively.

Table I : Total Duration of Breast Feeding

Duration of Breast Feeding (Months)	I.C.D.S. Group		Non-I.C.D.S. Group	
	No.	%	No.	%
5 & below	7	3.29	8	3.97
6—11	30	14.09	24	11.88
12—17	85	39.90	88	43.56
18—23	69	32.39	62	30.69
24 & above	22	10.33	20	9.90
Total	213	100.00	202	100.00

($X^2=0.96$, d.f.=4. $p>0.50$)

Majority of the children were weaned between 6—11 months of age in ICDS group (54.67%) while in non-ICDS group majority of the children (49.76%) were weaned between 12—17 months of age. All the children in ICDS group were weaned before attaining the age of 24 months while in Non-

ICDS group there were 11 (5.36%) children who were weaned after 24 months of age. These differences were found to be statistically significant. Mean age at weaning was 10.75 months in ICDS area and 16.28 months in Non-ICDS area.

Table II : Age at Weaning

Age at weaning	I.C.D.S. Group		Non-I.C.D.S. Group	
	No.	%	No.	%
5 & below	18	8.41	7	3.41
6—11	117	54.67	32	15.62
12—17	53	24.77	102	49.76
18—23	26	12.15	53	25.85
24 & above	0	0.00	11	5.36
Total	214	100.00	205	100.00

($X^2=84.86$, d.f. (After merging last 2 rows)=3, $P < 0.001$)

Feeding practices in ICDS & Non-ICDS Areas : Some Observations

Breast feeding was almost universally accepted method for feeding of infants in both the groups. Practice of breast feeding by almost all the rural mothers has consistently been reported (Idris et al 1981, Gupta et al 1984,) Sharma et al (1977), Bahl (1978), Katiyar et al (1981), and Gupta et al (1984) have also reported the same phenomenon in rural areas. Prolonged breast feeding in no way harms the child, but it has harmful effects on mother's health influencing the outcome of subsequent pregnancy. It is desirable that when we talk of promoting breast feeding we should also educate the mothers when to stop the breast feeding.

Majority of children in ICDS area (63.08%) and only 19.03% in Non-ICDS area were weaned before one year. This can be regarded as the most significant achievement of ICDS Scheme in the field of infant nutrition but lot more is needed to be done in this regard. Although the age at weaning in ICDS group was significantly lower, which could be due to the health education of mothers by Anganwadi Workers, only 8.41% children, even in the ICDS group, were weaned before the age of six months. Almost similar observations have been made by Gupta et al (1984) while working in the same area. Delayed weaning in rural areas has also been documented by many other workers (Sharma 1977, Bakshi et al 1977 and Katiyar et al 1981 to mention a few of them). This leaves much to be accomplished and we can hope for improvement in future.

Though the situation is far from ideal and investigations conducted at national

level are giving more acceptable answers, it can be said in context of present study that significant difference in study and control group can be attributed to the exposure of mothers to services rendered through ICDS Scheme and can be taken as an important achievement of this project.

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