

Feeding during the first three months of life

Alimentação nos primeiros três meses de vida

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Breastfeeding duration and the factors that make it a successful practice are extreme relevant topics. Based on the evidence of the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and because of the intensive campaign in favor of this practice in Brazil by means of different policies and programs that have been implemented over the last three decades, promoting periodical updates of the knowledge about the epidemiology of early weaning is crucial⁽¹⁻³⁾.

One of the highlights of the March issue of *Revista Paulista de Pediatria* is the article by Cristina Kaufmann, Elaine Albernaz, Regina Silveira, and Maria Mascarenhas on infant feeding⁽⁴⁾. The objectives of this study were: to assess the dietary profile in the first three months of life, to identify factors related to the weaning/early introduction of complementary foods, and to evaluate the adequacy of the use of utensils during this period.

The authors used a cohort study design with two components: perinatal stage (screening at hospital) and follow-up stage (home visits at one and three months of age). Data were collected by means of interviews with the mothers of babies born between September 2002 and May 2003. Home visits covered 30% of randomly selected infants. The final sample included 2,741 mothers. Of these, 973 were selected for home follow-up.

The study suggests only 60% of prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding in the first month, and 39% in the

third month. Such data demonstrate that infants from the city of Pelotas are inadequately fed. In the first month of life, 10% of infants had already been weaned, and in the third month, this figure had tripled. In spite of such low breastfeeding rate, when compared with previous decades, such data show an increase in the duration of breastfeeding in Pelotas, which is in agreement with what has been found in other regions of the country. Therefore, these data demonstrate that breastfeeding protection initiatives have led to decreased early weaning. This finding is essential to ensure that the existing programs and policies are maintained and broadened in Brazil.

Paternal educational level, intention to breastfeed, smoking during pregnancy, and use of pacifier were found to be risk factors for weaning in the first month of life. The risk factors for weaning in the third month of life were: paternal educational level, Caucasian mother, the fact that the mother lived with a partner, intention to breastfeed, smoking during pregnancy, use of pacifier, and bottle-feeding. Both models contribute to a better understanding of the determinants of breastfeeding. Since breastfeeding consists of a complex process involving the mother-child pair and their insertion into the family and society, its causal behavior has a different influence on breastfeeding establishment during the neonatal period and its maintenance in the subsequent months.

References

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