

BREAST FEEDING, CONTRACEPTION AND FERTILITY IN KAYSERİ Kayseri'de emzirme, gebelikten korunma ve doğurganlık

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Summary: A prospective study in Kayseri has been performed in order to determine the attitudes and practices of the women, who had just given birth, on breast-feeding, contraception and fertility. It was found that 96 % of the women thought to suckle their babies for 6 months or over, 100 % not to get pregnant at least for 2 years, 99.3 % to use any contraceptive method and 76.7 % to use IUD. However, according to the results of a 24 months follow up, 64 % of the women breastfed their babies for 6 months or over, 84.7 % have been using contraceptive methods, 36 % have been using IUD and 17.3 % had become pregnant. There was a poor correlation between lactational period and postpartum amenorrhoea.

Key Words: Breast feeding, Contraception, Pregnancy, Menstruation, Attitude

It is known that breast-feeding is the best form of nutrition for the baby and an important means of the birth spacing. Unfortunately, in many developing countries, the length and percentage of breast-feeding has been declining. This is rather clear, especially among the better educated women in urban areas.

On the other hand, the percentages of breast-feeding is increasing again among the better educated women in some developed countries such as the USA, Sweden and Australia(6).

The amount of the breast milk is closely related with the frequency and duration of infant suckling. The effects of the nutritional situation, age and parity of the mother have been found less important. In the rural areas, the mothers who

Özet: Yeni doğum yapmış kadınların emzirme, gebelikten korunma ve doğurganlık hakkındaki tutum ve davranışlarını belirlemek amacıyla, prospektif bir çalışma yapıldı. Kadınların %96'sının, bebeklerini 6 ay veya daha uzun süre emzirmeyi, %100'ünün en az 2 yıl süreyle gebe kalmamayı, %99.3'ünün gebelikten korunmayı ve %76.7'sinin RİA kullanmayı düşündükleri belirlendi. Ancak 24 aylık izlem sonuçlarına göre; kadınların %64'ü bebeğini 6 ay veya daha uzun süre emzirdi, %84.7'si gebelikten korunmaktaydı, %36'sı RİA kullanmaktaydı ve %17.3'ü gebe kalmıştı. Emzirme süresi ile doğum sonu amenore süresi arasında zayıf bir korelasyon bulundu.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Emzirme, Gebelikten korunma, Menstruasyon, Tutum

breast-feed their babies 12-14 times a day and go on breast-feeding during the nights can produce sufficient amount of milk for a long time, even if they are poorly nourished. If the mother begins to breast-feed once in 3 or 4 hours or she begins to give supplementary foods in the early months, amount of her milk decreases.

In general, the longer a women continues to breast-feed, the longer she will be protected against pregnancy (6). Certainly, this protection can not be accepted as a reliable contraception from the individual standpoint. But, in developing countries, it would be seen an increase in fertility rates, if the contraceptive use does not increase as to parallel with the shortening of breast-feeding period .

It is known that the length of breast-feeding has been also declining also in our country, in which breast-feeding is quite widespread. On the other hand, especially in rural areas, many women do not use any contraceptive method by the consideration of not becoming pregnant during lactation (2).

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METHODS

This research has been carried out in four region, those are Talas, Hacilar, Hisarcık and Gezi , under the Directorship of Kayseri Training and Research Health District. Out of these regions, Talas has urban, Hacilar and Hisarcık Semi-urban and Gezi rural characteristics.

In the research area, 160 women, who had just given birth in October and November in 1988, were included and no sampling has been done The women, who were included, have been visited in the first month after birth and they have been carried out a questionnaire in order to determine their attitudes on breast-feeding, contraception and fertility. After that, the same women were visited periodically for 24 months and their breast-feeding, contraception and pregnancy situations have been recorded in every month.

During the follow up, 10 of the women left the research area, for this reason, they have been dropped out and the data of 150 women have been evaluated

RESULTS

Some of the characteristics of the research group have been pointed out in Table 1. As it is seen in the table, the mean age of the women is 24.6. In spite of this, the average numbers of total pregnancies, live births and living children are 2.80, 2.37 and 2.15 respectively.

In the study group, 28 % of the women stated that, they did not want their last pregnancies and 64% of them do not want to become pregnant never again. Furthermore, none of the women, who wants some more children, thinks to become pregnant again at least in two years.

As it is seen in table 2, in the research group 99,3% of the women have started to breast-feed after the

birth. Although the women have thought breast-feeding on an average 14.3 months, the period of this breast-feeding has resulted in an average 10.5 months. Many women stopped breast-feeding in early time because they had become pregnant or their milk had been insufficient. (3 children died during the breast-feeding period and these have been drawn out from this evaluation). In the research group, 18% of the women have stated that they believe in the contraceptive effect of lactation and 46% of them have stated the opposite.

As it is seen in Table 3 , 99.3% of the women have thought contraception and 87.3 % of them have thought to introduce to contraception in 3 months after the birth. But, 90.7% of the women have begun to use any contraceptive method in 24 months time and 6% of them have given up the contraception in the same period. The percentage of the contraceptive users has been found 84.7% at the end of the follow up period.

Although 76.7% of the women have thought to use IUD, only 36 % of them have been able to obtain it. By contrast, 21,3% of the women have been using withdrawal method, although the percentage of those who have thought to use this method was only 6%.

34.7% of the women, who have ever used contraceptive methods, have changed the method during 24 months time. The methods which were most frequently left were withdrawal and condom.

As it is seen in figure 1, the percentage of the breast-feeding women is shown a linear decrease by time. On the other hand, the percentages of the women who are menstruating and using contraceptive methods are shown a nonlinear increase . Parallelism in the rates of menstruation and contraception is quite considerable.

The median value of the postpartum amenorrheal periods is 3 months, but arithmetical mean is 4.6 months. The means of amenorrheal periods have been found 4 months in urban, 4.5 months in semi-urban and 5.7 months as for in rural areas.

There has been found a poor correlation between

breast-feeding and postpartum amenorrheal period ($r=0.387$) and this relationship has been shown as a linear regression (Figure 2).

Again, as it is seen in figure 1, of the women 17.3% have become pregnant in the period of 24 months. The 16 of these women were not using any contraceptive method when they had become pregnant. The others stayed that they had become pregnant in spite of contraceptive methods (6 withdrawal, 3 condom and 1 IUD)

Table 1. Some characteristics of the research group

Characteristics	Averages
Age(Year)	24.60
Total number of pregnancies	2.80
live births	2.37
living children	2.15

Table 2. Expected and practised periods of breast-feeding in the research group

Duration of Breast-feeding (Months)	Attitude %	Practice %
Less than 6 months	4.0	36.0
6-12months	58.7	25.9
More than 12 months	37.3	38.1
Total	100.0	100.0
Mean duration (months)	14.3	10.5

Table 3. Expected and practised times for introducing to contraception in the research group

Time for introducing to contraception (Months after the birth)	Attitude %	Practice %
0-3 months	87.3	52.0
4-6 months	6.7	17.3
7-12 months	2.7	13.3
Later than 12 months	1.3	8.0
Don't know	1.3	0.0
Never	0.7	9.3
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 4. Expected and current practised contraceptive methods in the research group

Contraceptive Methods to Use	Attitude %	Practice %
IUD	76.7	36.0
Oral Contraceptives	2.7	9.3
Condom	8.7	16.0
Tubal Ligation	2.0	1.3
Withdrawal	6.0	21.3
Vaginal spermicides	0.0	0.7
No idea	3.3	0.0
None	0.7	15.3
Total	100.0	100.0

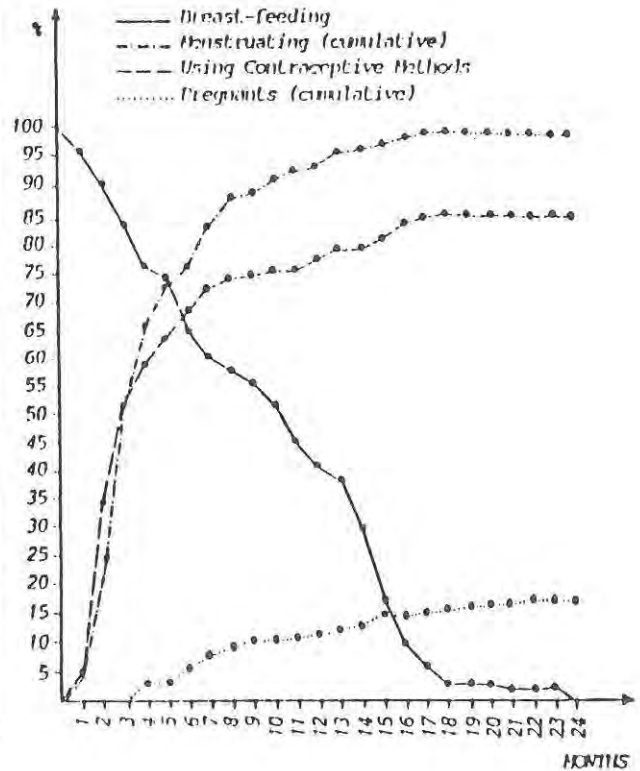


Figure 1. The percentages of the women who are breast-feeding, menstruating, using contraceptive methods and have become pregnant according to the months after delivery

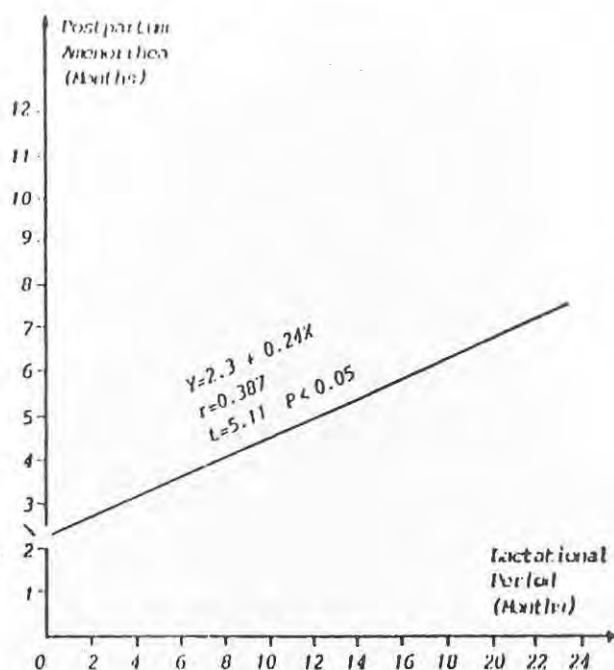


Figure 2. The relationship between lactational and postpartum amenorrheal periods

DISCUSSION

The women in the research group have breast-fed their babies on average for 10.5 months, whereas they thought to breast-feed their babies on average for 14.3 months. Averages of breast-feeding periods have been reported shorter than 2 months in Costa Rica, longer than 30 months in Bangladesh and 10.28 months in Turkey (1,6). The average found in our research is similar to the average given for Turkey. However, this period is 4 months shorter than the period thought by the mothers. Many women have stopped breast-feeding because of becoming pregnant and insufficient milk. These problems depend on inadequate education of the women on breast-feeding and contraception.

Nearly all of the women in the research group have thought to start contraception in 3 months and

to use IUD or other modern contraceptive methods. However, both the beginning time for contraception and the contraceptive methods practised are rather different than those thought.

The percentage of IUD users is less than thought. In contrast, the percentages of the users withdrawal, oral contraceptives and condom have found higher than thought. These data have pointed out that the services for IUD insertion are not adequate. For this reason, a lot of women are not able to provide IUD and they turn towards the less effective methods, such as withdrawal or condom initially, but when they are able to apply, they have return to use IUD, by giving up the other methods. In a research, which has been carried out in Gemlik Health Area, it has been found that 53% of the women using any contraceptive method have changed the method at least one time during their marriage and it has been understood that withdrawal is the least given up method (4). These different results may depend on the differences between the short term and the long term periods.

In the research group, the mean of postpartum amenorrhea has been found 4.6 months. In the rural area, this period is 1.5 months longer than that in urban area. It has been reported that as a general, postpartum amenorrhea is longer in rural area (5). Mean duration of amenorrhea had been found 4.2 months in a study carried out in Hacilar District (7).

In the research group, 17.3% of the women have become pregnant during 24 months. Most of these women were using no contraceptive method or withdrawal method. In another study carried out in the same area, 13.6% of the pregnant have been determined to use withdrawal method when they become pregnant (3).

There was a poor correlation in the positive direction between the periods of lactation and postpartum amenorrhea. Similar correlations have been found between these two variables in some studies done before (1,2). This situation has shown that breast-feeding may reduce the risk of pregnancy to some extent.

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