

# First Feed Given to the New Born Babies - A Survey in an Urban Community of Lahore

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**Background:** Pakistan being 7<sup>th</sup> populous country is facing a high Neonatal Mortality Rate and it is reported that acute gastroenteritis is one of the major factor to this high Neonatal Mortality Rate. Avoiding colostrums and giving some prelacteal feed are contributory factors for gastroenteritis. Which ultimately leads to high Neonatal Mortality Rate. **Objectives:-**To study the first feed practice adopted by lactating mothers in a community in Lahore. **Study design.** Cross sectional community based survey. **Place and duration of the study:-** Dubhi mandi near old Anarkali Lahore from January 2002 to June 2002. **Respondants and methods:** - 180 mothers who delivered in the previous year were listed and interviewed on structured pre tested questionnaire. **Results:** 32% mothers feed colostrums, and 68% started with other items like honey 27%, ghutti 18%, Araq 8%, water & sugar 4%, cow and formula milk 12%. Out of (122) those who did not started with colostrums, 59% done it intentionally under the influence of family traditions /taboos of either avoiding colostrums being a stale food or to get the first feed by a person of good fortune, 31% missed by ignorance and 10% due to medical reasons. Out of 58 mothers who started with costume 45% were motivated by health professionals, 39% by relatives/friends and 20% by media. **Conclusion:** It is conclude that still prelacteal feed is common practice. It is also observed that people change this practice under the guidance of health professionals . So situation can be improved by increasing liaison of pregnant mothers with health professionals ,who should continuously motivate the mother during pregnancy and delivery, to start with colostrums with in half hour of delivery.

**Key words:** Colostrums, Pre lacteal feeding. Urban area.

Pakistan is the 7<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world and ranks on the list of countries with the highest Neonatal mortality rates. Neonatal mortality accounts for 40-60 % of all Infant mortalities in Pakistan, and 60 % of Neonatal deaths take place in the First week of life<sup>1</sup> Low birth weight and gastroenteritis are the first most causes for this mortality.

Inappropriate feeding practices such as prelacteal feed, artificial feeding and mixed feeding may lead to gastroenteritis in new born<sup>2</sup>. In a case control study in Lahore, (Ashraf et al) found a significantly increased risk of Neonatal sepsis with the administration of prelacteal feed, artificial or animal milk<sup>3</sup> similarly, in a case control study in Karachi (Bhutta and yousaf) also found a significant increase of sepsis with mixed feeding<sup>4</sup>

The practice of giving prelacteal feeds immediately after birth is both widespread and deeply rooted in society, with the believe that this feed will transfer the good characters / qualities of the person who has given this prelacteal feed . In the community survey from Sind, 44% of new born infants were given supplemental liquids like "Ghutti" and "Honey"<sup>5</sup> The Lahore study showed that prelacteal feeds were common in a form of herbal water, honey, artificial milk and formula milk<sup>6</sup> This universal practice of prelacteal feeding delays the initiation of breast feeding.

A study in 1991 found that 80% of women in Bluchistan considered colostrums deleterious to the health of new born. Although, there seem to be a change in this practice as recently 43% of women in Karachi (2000) and 57% of women in Jhelum (1999) reported giving colostrums to their new born<sup>7</sup>, but problem still exists

This project was designed firstly to see that what first feeding practices are going on in middle class in urban community in Lahore and how they justified those practices, and secondly to formulate d some interventions for improvement of situation.

## Materials and methods

For this cross sectional community based survey, such areas of Lahore were listed where middle class lives and area of Dubhi mandi near old Anarkali was selected randomly. After the initial area survey, all those mothers who delivered in the last one year were registered and out of these mothers a sample size of 177 ( rounded to 180) was calculated by using Epi Info statistical package. All the selected mothers were interviewed by on the job trained medical students, on a structured and pre-tested Performa.

Data was cleaned and entered in to computer and analyzed by using Epi Info statistical package

## Results:

Table 1: What was given in first feed

Colostrums	58
Honey	50
Ghutti	32
Water + sugar	07
Araq	11
Formula milk and cow milk	22

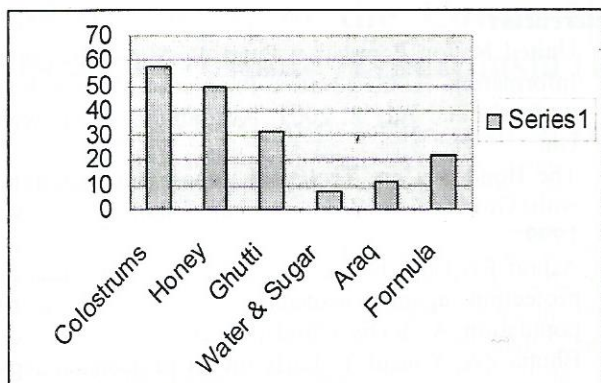


Table 2: Source for motivation for colostrum

Family members	16
Media	12
Health personal	24
Friends and others	06

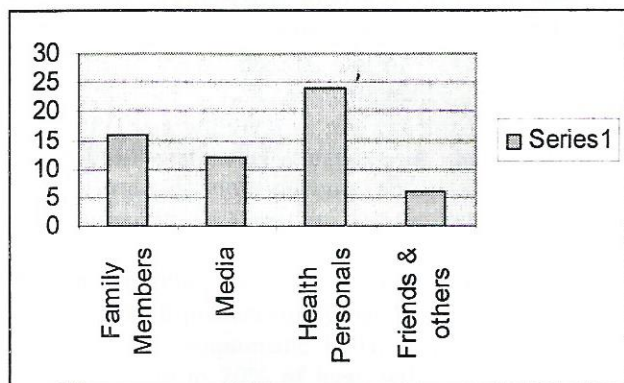


Table 3: Reasons for not starting with colostrum.

Family traditions and Believes	72
Ignorance	38
Failure of LET DOWN mechanism	12

Personnal profiles of lactating mothers

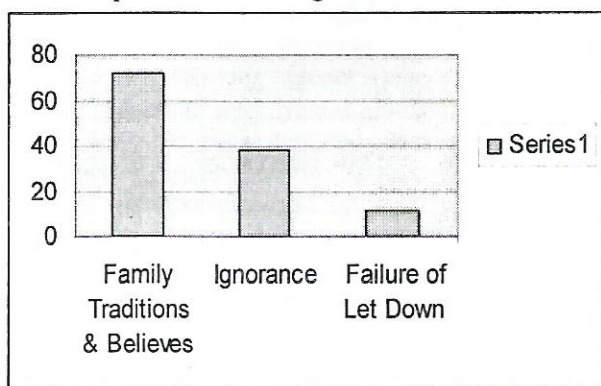


Table 4: Educational status

Illeterat + primary	124
More educated (Matric & above)	56

Table 5: Occupational status

Working	70
Non working	110

Table 6: Type of family

Nuclear	70
Extended	110

Table 7: Per capita income of family

Upto Rs.2000 per month	135
More than Rs.2000 per month	65

Table 8: Parity

First child	45
2 <sup>nd</sup> or more	126

Table 9: Type of latest delivery

Normal	140
C-section	40

Table 10: Place of lsyrdy delivery

Home	126
Health facility	54

Discussion:

As the main purpose of the study was to observe that what was given as first feed to the new born. It is observed from the findings that only 32% mothers started exclusively with colostrums where as 68% mothers started with other items like honey 27%, ghutti 18%, araq 6%, water+sugar 4%, cow and formula milk 12% etc. Out of those who started with colostrums considering it a beneficial thing for the new born, 28% were motivated by their family members , 11% were motivated by friends, 41% by health professionals and 21% by media.

Out of those who started with other items, 59% avoided colostrums under the influence of their family traditions and believes, 31% missed the best thing due to ignorance and 10% were unable to start with colostrums due to failure of LET DOWN mechanism.

On further exploration in to the traditions and believes which restrict the feeding of colostrums, the general opinion was that colostrums is not milk but it is dirty and stale secretion and is to be discarded. However there was a group who did not consider colostrums a harmful thing but they believe that as first feed to the newborn ghutti by a selected person will bless the new born with some life long benefits

Although it looks that better percentage of more educated mothers give colostrums as first feed as compare to the less educated mothers, but the difference was

statistically non significant. Similar non significant differences were observed in reference to income, working status of the mothers and parity. However delivery in a health facility have significant impact on giving colostrums as first feed

**Conclusion:**

It is concluded from the findings that 58 mothers (32%) have given colostrums as first feed where as 122 mothers (68%) have given some other pre lacteal feed and this wide spread practice is without the impact of education, income and parity. But is partially modified in those mothers who delivered in health facilities and they were motivated by health professionals

It is concluded that still existing practice of pre lacteal feeds can be modified to colostrums by the increased contact with health professionals during pregnancy and delivery.

LHVs, LHWs, TBAs should be refreshed continuously and they should motivate the mothers on every contact to give exclusively colostrums as first feed and further the mothers should be encouraged to start the colostrums within half an hour of delivery.

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