

Perceptions, Practices and Traditional Beliefs Related to Neonatal Jaundice among Egyptian Mothers: A Cross-Sectional Descriptive Study

Summary

Neonatal jaundice (NNJ) is one of the most common neonatal disorders worldwide. It is still a main cause of avoidable brain damage, physical and mental impairment, and probable death in newborns.

We aimed to assess perceptions, practices, and traditional beliefs among Egyptian mothers toward NNJ that may contribute to delayed presentation and inappropriate management of hyperbilirubinemia.

This descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted from January to May 2015. We interviewed 400 Egyptian mothers who gave birth in <1 month before the study using a structured questionnaire. Participants were recruited from outpatients of Cairo University Teaching Hospital.

This study revealed unexpected moderate knowledge and attitude scores of Egyptian mothers in most domains with a mean of 6.6 and 20.6, respectively, although the majority of them were illiterate or had low educational attainment. In terms of knowledge, 52.3% of participants had adequate knowledge about NNJ in the aspects of awareness, risk factors, management, and complications. Almost all participants exhibited moderate (89.8%) and high levels (10%) of positive attitudes toward NNJ. Maternal sociodemographic factors influenced knowledge level, attitudes, and behaviors related to NNJ in Egypt. Working mothers and those residing in urban areas were significantly more knowledgeable ($P = 0.023$ and 0.021 , respectively), and attained higher attitude scores ($P < 0.001$ and $P < 0.001$, respectively) than housewives and rural ones. Moreover, significantly higher attitude scores ($P < 0.001$) were attained by those who had completed their university [22.3 (SD = 3.1)] or postgraduate education [22.2 (SD = 3.6)].

The majority of Egyptian mothers have a satisfactory level of knowledge and attitudes related to NNJ. However, cultural beliefs and traditional infant care practices still have an impact on mothers regardless of their educational level.