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Decision-making and practice on infant feeding: A case study of women in a prevention of mother to child transmission programme in Gauteng province, South Africa

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HIV/AIDS poses a great challenge on the fetus as they are exposed to the risk of infection during pregnancy and around the time of delivery. Mixed feeding has been identified as a problem that contributes to a high rate of Mother to Child Transmission (MTCT). The problem of MTCT gave rise to the initiation of the prevention of mother to child programme (PMTCT) which is a strategy to reduce HIV transmission to the baby and its success depends on adherence to exclusive feeding. Mothers are to make decisions on what infant feeding methods to practice once they are in the programme. A qualitative, explorative research approach was conducted among 32 mothers on PMTCT programme at Phedisong Clinic 4. An Interview guide developed in English and translated into Setswana was used in five focus groups. Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis and open coding where by themes and sub themes were identified. Different circumstances such as socio-economic status, health status and pre-feeding history led the mothers to choose the initial infant feeding method. During decision making a number of factors influenced them: family, pamphlets, TV advertisements and health care workers. Decision making of infant feeding practices for mothers is influenced greatly by their circumstances. Most mothers expressed fears and anxiety about having to breastfeed, concerned that they would infect their babies with HIV from their breast milk and this makes it difficult to make decisions on infant feeding practices. Most mothers make decisions of infant feeding during the prenatal period where mothers are still planning to have their babies. Mixed feeding was the common mode of feeding. Stigma is also a great concern as it pressurized mothers to choose a certain infant feeding because they do not want to be discriminated against and expose their HIV status. Health care providers need to provide accurate, extensive and continuous counseling which should start as early as possible to increase adherence and enable the mothers to choose the right infant feeding method for their infants.

Biography

K C Modibedi is an experienced R/N, Nurse Educator, worked at hospital setting and at Chris Hani Baragwanath Nursing College as a lecturer for community nursing science for 10 years, she acquired her Degree in nursing education, nursing administration, Assessor, and moderator and majored in community nursing science. Continued to have Masters in Public Health and has 5 years' experience in the public health sector, she currently is working at an NGO, Anova health Institute where she is a programme manager for the MSM project. She is very passionate about access to health by all key population groups for HIV/AIDS. She has publications in 3 journals and is still producing research work under Key population context, at the same time running a programme to provide services to key population group and closing the gap within the public health sector.

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