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Topic: The first 1000 days, infant feeding, and early childhood development

Title: To describe the use of length based indices in growth assessment of children at primary care clinics in Grahamstown clinics, Eastern Cape from November 2012 to January 2014

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Introduction

The South Africa road to health booklet (RTHB) incorporated length/height based growth indices in 2010. For routine growth monitoring and promotion the RTHB uses weight based growth indices and the length based indices periodically. This study was aimed to report on the utilisation of length based indices in child growth assessment at primary care clinics in Grahamstown.

Methods

A cross sectional study at all seven primary care facilities in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape was done. Data was collected from November 2012 to January 2014. The RTHB of 164 children aged 0-24 months were conveniently sampled after their primary care visit; their RTHB audited using a checklist tool that was designed for the study based on the growth monitoring guidelines for the RTHB.

Results

Among children eligible for length measurement, the RTHBs of 18.1% of the children had a recorded length in the past six months; 10.0% had a plotted length for age and 2.2% weight for length. There were no recorded interpretations of these recorded measures or indices.

Conclusion

Length based indices in 0-24 month old children were not used routinely in child growth assessment at the clinics. This may affect the case detection and interventions for linear growth faltering and stunting, severe acute malnutrition, and the detection of overweight/obesity. Length-based indices as additional indices in growth monitoring and promotion require more time, resources and training to prevent measurement errors and to ensure useful interpretation for targeting for interventions. Utilisation of these indices at primary care clinics needs revisiting.

