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Introduction

Breastfeeding is important for preventing malnutrition in infants and young children. The World Health Organisation recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. However, exclusive breast feeding rates have declined in Ghana. This study sought to determine the barriers and enhancers of exclusive breast feeding among mothers attending a child welfare clinic.

Methods

This was a cross-sectional study involving 120 mothers with a baby less than six months attending the child welfare clinic at Mamprobi Polyclinic in Accra. Information on socio-demographic characteristics such as age, religion, marital status, level of education and number of children was obtained using a structured questionnaire. Breastfeeding practices and the factors influencing them were also determined.

Results

Seventy percent (70%) of mothers interviewed reported that they practiced exclusive breast feeding for six months. Mothers who delivered by spontaneous vaginal delivery were more likely to practice exclusive breast feeding than mothers who delivered by caesarean section or assisted vaginal delivery. Mothers who received help at home did not appear to practice exclusive breast feeding more than those who do not get help at home. Work related factors including the need to resume work and lack of privacy as well as the cosmetic value placed on the breast were barriers to exclusive breast feeding.

Conclusion

Interventions that can mitigate work related obstacles to breastfeeding and assist mothers to maintain lactation when they are away from their babies or unable to breastfeed may be useful in promoting exclusive breast feeding in this setting.