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

Title: Feeding practices, HIV exposure and infant's nutritional status in the first 1000 days; a study of infants from selected districts in Botswana.

Presentation Type: Oral

Introduction: Better understanding of nutritional status of HIV exposed infants and non-HIV exposed infants, within the context of feeding practices in their first 1000 days is a matter of public health importance. This study compares the nutritional status, feeding practices of HIV exposed and non-HIV exposed infants within their first 1000 days from selected districts in Botswana.

Methods: A comparative cross-sectional study was conducted in 413 infants (37.3% HIV-exposed), aged 6-24 months attending routine child health clinics in Francistown, Kgatleng, Selebi Phikwe and Kweneng East districts. Anthropometric measures, 24 hour dietary intake and socio-demographic data were collected. Z-scores were calculated using 2006 WHO growth standards to identify stunting, wasting and underweight.

Results: The overall prevalence of stunting, wasting and underweight was 10.4%, 11.9% and 10.2% respectively. HIV-exposed infants were more likely to be underweight (15.6% vs. 6.9%), ($p=0.008$) and stunted (15.6% vs. 7.3%), ($p= 0.013$). There were no significant differences in wasting between HIV and non-HIV exposed infants. HIV-exposed infants tended to formula feed (89.4%) compared to non-HIV exposed infants who tended to breastfeed (89.6%) at 0-6 months ($p<0.001$).

Conclusion: This study demonstrated poor nutritional status in HIV exposed infants compared to non-HIV exposed infants in selected districts in Botswana. HIV exposure is an important factor that dictates feeding practices. A rethink of how infant feeding policy is implemented may be required, to ensure optimal nutrition for all infants, especially in the first 1000 days.