



Breastfeeding knowledge and attitudes among medical students in a Public University in Malaysia

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Abstract

Introduction: Effective educational efforts require knowledgeable health professionals and particularly physicians to promote breastfeeding and instigate changes in individual behavior. This research was conducted to assess breastfeeding knowledge, and attitudes among medical students who are future healthcare professionals.

Methods: A cross-sectional study design was conducted from March to April 2011 among medical students currently studying in the 2010/2011 session in a public university in Malaysia. Data were collected using pre-tested self-administered questionnaire.

Results: Only 354 out of 436 medical students which made up 81.2% responded to this study. The finding revealed that overall, 37.3% (132) of the medical students had adequate knowledge and 57.1% (202) of respondents had positive attitude towards breastfeeding. Adequate knowledge on breast feeding and positive attitude were significantly associated with ethnic, religious and academic years as well as and history of ever breastfed of the respondents ($p < 0.05$). The major sources of information on breastfeeding acquired by respondents were found to be from mass media (75.7%) followed by the course syllabus (74.3%).

Conclusions: The study showed inadequate knowledge of medical students towards breast feeding, although they showed relatively positive attitude. Healthcare providers and physicians must have the necessary skills to provide breastfeeding education and support, and to improve health outcomes at the community level. Strategies are warranted to improve breastfeeding education in the medical and health related fields' curriculum, focusing on breastfeeding management skills.

Keywords: Attitude, Breast feeding, Knowledge, Medical Students.