Nutrition and infant feeding survey of women and children in Sarajevo during July 1993

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Abstract:

OBJECTIVE: To collect baseline information on nutritional status and infant feeding practices in besieged Sarajevo and to identify areas for action. DESIGN: Thirty communities (clusters) were randomly selected from 84 local communities within besieged Sarajevo. A starting point within a community was randomly selected and subsequent houses visited until the required sample size was reached. 19 collective centres were included in a separate sample. SETTING: The survey was carried out in besieged Sarajevo during July 1993. SUBJECTS: Subjects included residents and refugees. The nutritional status of 524 children aged from six to 59 months and 494 women of child-bearing age was assessed. Information on feeding practices was obtained from a subsample of 64 mothers with babies less than 16 weeks old. MEASUREMENTS: Children and the women who accompanied them were weighed and measured. Weight for height Z scores were calculated for children and body mass index (BMI) was calculated for women. A structured questionnaire on infant feeding practices was administered to mothers of babies.

RESULTS: There were no indications of undernutrition in children above the 2.5% which would normally be expected in a population. Among resident women, 10.8% had a BMI < 18.5, compared to 4.4% among refugee women in private accommodation and 8.6% in collective centres. The weights of refugee women in collective centres were significantly higher than the weights of resident women (ANOVA, p = 0.03). Only 6% of mothers with babies less than 16 weeks old were exclusively breast feeding.

CONCLUSION: Nutritional monitoring proved to be possible and useful in assessing breast feeding practices and nutritional status. The level of exclusive breast feeding was extremely low, probably due to lack of relevant education of health workers.

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