Community-based breastfeeding support and the management of MAM in infants aged < 6 months: Lessons from Asia

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Presentation Outline

- Background
- Current programme and recent findings
- Challenges
- Conclusions
- Suggestions
Background

- Lack of nutritional status data for <6m in national surveys
- In Bangladesh, child malnutrition rates have remained high over the last decade
- Around half the children < 5 years are undernourished (41% stunted, 36% underweight and 16% wasted – BDHS 2011)
- Training for management of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) has been provided in several govt. facilities
- But no clear guidelines are available as yet for management of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) in the 6-59 m age group
- MAM in infants <6m is not documented, exclusive breastfeeding is suggested for all, but very rarely is any practical help given.
• Demonstrated effectiveness of community-based peer counsellors in increasing exclusive breastfeeding (*Lancet*, 2000)

• Move from research to programme – establishment of TAHN Foundation
Current programme

- Female peer counselors trained
- Adapted, simplified WHO/Unicef, AED and national training materials

Training ➔ classroom ➔ community
Current programme contd...

Counselling visits
- 2 in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy
- 1 within 48 hrs of birth (or earliest possible)
- Within 7-10 days
- Monthly till infant is 6 months old

Focus on
- Early initiation & exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) for 6m
- Practical demonstrations, assistance and checks
- Problem solving
- Confidence building
Current programme contd...

- Supervised practice in the community
- Regular monitoring by TAHN staff
- Growth promotion every month
Recent Findings

Jan 2012- Sept 2013
Mothers & Babies Enrolled
740

With recorded birth weight
639

LBW (<2.5 kg)
76 (12%)

Completed 6m
40 (53%)

Normal Weight (NW)
563 (88%)

Completed 6m
304 (54%)
Photos of some LBW babies and families
Case 1

- Boy, birth wt 2.0kg

At 4 and 1/2 m, baby weighed 6.1 kg and was EBF

Problem – adolescent mother
#2  Girl, birth wt 2 kg
1st issue of parents

EBF at 4 m, wt 5.7 kg

Problem – mother gives less time to baby, short duration of BF
# 3 - Girl, birth wt 2.4 kg

Problem – mother diabetic and often depressed

But continued EBF
At 5 and half months wt was 6.5 kg
Mothers need Help!

Perception of insufficient milk ----
At 2 months weighed 4.8 kg, and 4.2 kg

- Needed assistance with position & attachment

# 5
Birth weights 2.2 kg and 2 kg (Twin)

Mother anxious....
Same twins, EBF for 6 months, wt 7 and 6 kgs
Main Challenges

- Lack of skilled health staff to prevent and manage MAM
- Environmental (esp WASH) problems and frequent illness
- Conflicting messages/advice from health staff/ neighbours
- Referral centres for SAM/ MAM not available – or not known
- Mother’s perceptions

- Lack of awareness/ belief in benefits of breastfeeding
- Mothers time …
- Psychosocial problems
- Marketing and promotion of breastmilk substitutes
Exclusively Breastfed for 6 months

**LBW (n=40)**
- EBF 85%
- PTBF 15%

**NW (n=282)**
- EBF 89%
- PTBF 11%

**EBF** = Exclusive Breastfeeding
**PTBF** = Partial Breastfeeding
Prevalence of MAM in LBW & NW Babies, Jan 2012-Sept-2013 (using W/A)
Conclusions

- Community-based breastfeeding support is effective and sustainable
- Very high EBF rates were achieved for LBW and normal weight infants
- Required frequent monitoring visits and supportive supervision
- Despite individual home-based counselling, MAM rates were 3-4 times higher in LBW infants.
Suggestions

• Ensure targeted, intensive breastfeeding support for mothers of LBW babies

• Build/facilitate mechanisms for clinical checks and treatment of illness

• Provide appropriate training for health facility and community staff -
  
  growth charts, counselling, action
Suggestions contd...

- Build linkages with programmes that impact on <6m infants (AH & N, RH, Safe Delivery FP, BFI, EPI, IMCI, growth monitoring)
- Include fathers/ grandfathers in counselling/orientation sessions
- Provide a holistic and comprehensive package of feasible and sustainable interventions and support
- More action oriented research.
Thank You!