

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WEIGHT FOR AGE CHART IN THE CHILD HEALTH DEVELOPMENT RECORD AMONG MOTHERS OF INFANTS OVER SIX MONTHS IN PILIYANDALA MOH AREA

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Child Health Development Record (CHDR) is a document which records growth and development details of a child from birth to adolescence. It is a tool which makes parents actively participate in and develop a greater understanding of their child's growth. Growth charts in CHDR are important in monitoring the growth of children. In the current CHDR, growth charts are color coded for easy parental understanding and interpretation. There are separate charts for weight, length/height and head circumference for boys and girls. In children, weight is the most common measured indicator for assessment of growth. Hence, accurate understanding of the weight for age chart and growth patterns is necessary for parents to understand the child's growth and detect problems early. The objective was to assess knowledge and understanding of the weight for age chart and growth patterns in CHDR among mothers of infants in Piliyandala MOH area. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at seven randomly selected child welfare clinics in Piliyandala MOH area. Study population comprised of mothers of infants over

6 months. A pre-tested interviewer administered questionnaire and a series of marked and unmarked weight for age charts were used as tools. Out of the total number of mothers (n=189) interviewed, approximately half (52.4%) (n=99) had average knowledge and 14.3% (n=27) of mothers had poor knowledge on weight for age chart in CHDR. Nearly half the population (46.6%) identified the colour zones of the weight for age chart in CHDR correctly. Two thirds (67.7%) of mothers identified growth patterns parallel to the median line as healthy growth. However, only 21.2% identified weight gain of a low birth weight baby parallel to the median but at the -2SD line as an acceptable growth pattern in weight for age chart. About 1/3 of mothers misinterpreted rapid weight gain of a low-birth weight as a healthy pattern. Majority of mothers had satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the weight for age chart in CHDR. However, their interpretation was not optimal with a preference for upward moving growth patterns indicating their desire for a "fat" baby rather than a "thin" baby.

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