

# Selected abstracts from unpublished works

## FEEDING PATTERNS AND HEALTH ASSESSMENT OF THE FIJIAN AND THE FIJI-INDIAN NEONATE

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This study describes the effects of infant feeding on infant health in Fijian and Fiji-Indian neonates. Cultural and physiological parameters of the problem were examined, including patterns of breast- and bottle-feeding, factors influencing the mother's choice of infant feeding method, and the impact of feeding on infant weight gain. Data were collected from three sources.

First, a cultural description of the context of infant care was obtained from multigravida women and traditional birth attendants. To assess the inhibitors and facilitators of breast-feeding, participant observation and interviews were con-

ducted with the mothers attending a post-natal clinic. Second, physical examinations were given to 33 mother-infant dyads within three days of delivery, and the mothers were interviewed. These examinations were repeated six weeks postpartum.

Third, a retrospective survey of the hospital records of all births for one year were conducted. Information on the mothers, on infants born during that year, and on previous infants born to those mothers was collected. The total sample consisted of 941 mothers and 1801 infants. Data were collected on prenatal variables, delivery variables, and infant feeding variables; infant weight gain was used as the criterion variable.

In spite of the attempts of the hospital to establish breast-feeding with all mothers before discharge, a pattern of mixed feeding became apparent. Fifteen percent of the mothers changed their feeding method in the first week. By the sixth week, only 47.5% of the mothers were breast-feeding, 37.5% were using both breast and bottle, and 15% were bottle-feeding. The study further showed that the Fijian community response toward the infant initially enhanced breast-feeding but later tended to encourage bottle-feeding as multiple caretakers separated the mother and the infant. A fear of poison milk was the main cultural belief interfering with nursing among Fijians. With the Fiji-Indians, the cultural value of modesty and the status of the Indian mother in the household were the main cultural barriers to nursing.

Consistent with previous research, statistically significant correlations among ten of the variables were obtained from the hospital survey data. However, path analy-

sis demonstrated that these variables in total contributed to only 9% of the total variance of infant weight gain and are therefore of no clinical importance. These results support Dugdale's<sup>1</sup> findings that in the more developed third world countries, selection of the breast- or bottle-feeding is not an important factor contributing to infant morbidity.

## Reference

1. Dugdale AE: Infant feeding, growth and mortality: A twenty year study of an Australia Aboriginal community. *Med J Australia* 2(7):380-385, 1980.

## FATHER-INFANT ATTACHMENT

**Julie C. Fortier**, Assistant Professor, Maternal and Newborn Nursing, University of Maryland, School of Nursing, Baltimore, Maryland

It has been suggested that witnessing the birth process promotes attachment to the infant. Therefore, the following research question was posed: Do fathers who witness the birth of their infants exhibit more attachment behaviors the first time they see their infants than fathers who do not? The study was conducted over four months in 1980 in a private community hospital in a metropolitan setting.

## Theoretical basis

Research has found that early mother-infant separation, seen in many hospitals today, seems to cause separated mothers to react to their infants differently than those not separated. Others have found high correlations between separation due to prematurity and later instances of child

ducted with the mothers attending a post-natal clinic. Second, physical examinations were given to 33 mother-infant dyads within three days of delivery, and the mothers were interviewed. These examinations were repeated six weeks postpartum.

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battering and failure to thrive without organic cause. The benefits of potentially being able to predict and prevent such devastating occurrences makes particularly important the description of the normal process by which mothers and fathers become attached to their infants.

### Method

A static group comparison was made between fathers who witnessed the birth of their infant and fathers who did not. The sample consisted of 39 biological fathers viewing their infants for the first time. A group of 27 fathers was observed in the delivery room shortly after the birth, and the other group of 12 fathers was observed in the recovery room within one hour of the delivery. The Father-Infant Attachment Inventory developed by Edwards<sup>1</sup> was utilized to score the attachment behaviors exhibited during the first five minutes

of infant interaction. (Each mother had undergone a normal labor and delivery of a full-term infant.)

### Results

A *t* test for independent group samples was used to analyze the attachment scores. The following findings were noted:

- A significant difference ( $p < .025$ ) between the two groups of fathers was found.
- The number of previous children fathers had, their attendance at child-birth classes, and the sex of the infant did not significantly affect their attachment scores.

### Reference

1. Edwards RM: *Father's demonstration of attachment behaviors towards their infants*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Maryland School of Nursing, 1976.