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The effect of antenatal breastfeeding education on maternal and infant health

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Background & Aim: WHO indicates only breastfeeding is necessary and sufficient for infants in the first six months, and it should be given onwards with the additional food from the 6th month up to 2 years. Unfortunately, breastfeeding in Turkey is still not at the desired level. It has positive effect not only for infant health but also for mother health. We aimed to investigate the effect of antenatal breastfeeding education on maternal and infant health.

Methods: Ninety pregnant that admitted for antenatal care January-March 2015 were randomly divided in two groups. Breastfeeding education was given face-to-face to the intervention group (IG). Knowledge level of mothers before and after education was determined via a questionnaire related with breast milk and breastfeeding. Breastfeeding behaviour was evaluated by LATCH on the postpartum 5th day. A questionnaire was prepared to assess the baby's health in the first months and Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale was used to assess the mother's mental health at 6 weeks after birth.

Results: A significant increase in the level of knowledge was observed in the IG (n=42) after breastfeeding education. The mean score of LATCH in IG was 8.7 ± 1 ; 7.9 ± 1.5 in control group ($p=0.02$). IG was found to breastfeed more often control group (CG). 81% of infants of the IG and 52% of the CG were observed that they fed only breast milk in the first month. CG had higher risk for depression. Infantile colic was more frequent with high risk of postpartum depression in the CG.

Conclusions: Antenatal breastfeeding education has positive effects on maternal mental health and infantile colic. It provided an increase in the level of knowledge of mothers about breastfeeding. Also more successful breastfeeding behaviour was observed in mothers. We believe that family physicians should support pregnant by antenatal breastfeeding education.