

Pediatric Nurses' Attitudes and Knowledge Regarding the Provision of Breastfeeding

Support in a Pediatric Medical Center

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February, 2009

Clinical Practice

Abstract

Breastfeeding gives all neonates the best nutritional start in life. Successful breastfeeding depends, in part, on the support of the nursing staff caring for the breastfeeding dyad. Many infants are admitted to pediatric hospitals during the period when breastfeeding patterns are being established and mothers look to pediatric nurses to provide breastfeeding support and encouragement. There are few studies on pediatric nurses' knowledge of and attitudes towards the provision of breastfeeding support. The purpose of this descriptive survey study was to determine knowledge and attitudes of pediatric nurses' regarding the provision of breastfeeding support. The Theory of Reasoned Action provided the framework for the study. A convenience sample of 145 pediatric nurses on three inpatient units at a pediatric medical center was invited to complete a 40-item Breast Feeding Survey. Seventy-six complete surveys were returned for a response rate of 52%. Results indicated that pediatric nurse's have moderate breastfeeding knowledge and attitudes. Mean total knowledge score was 47.2/65 ($R = 32-61$, $SD = 5.09$). Mean total attitude score was 91.9/135 ($R = 71-112$, $SD = 8.13$). The pediatric nurses' who had personal breastfeeding experience had significantly higher knowledge ($r = -.275$, $p = .025$) and attitude ($r = -.259$, $p = .024$) scores. In addition, a significant relationship between total knowledge and total attitude scores ($r = .574$, $p = .000$) was found. Findings suggest the need for educational programs to improve pediatric nurses' knowledge of and attitudes towards the provision of breastfeeding support in pediatric medical centers.