

UNDERSTANDING THE RELEVANCE OF 'FIRST 1000 DAYS PROGRAMME' ON CHILDCARE SUPPORT AND NUTRITION

Dr. Sampurna Guha

Assistant Professor, AIRS, Amity University, Noida

Abstract—The first 1000 days of life refers to the critical period of child growth and development which spans the time period between conception and the age of two years attained by the child. According to UNICEF this unique period offers a window of opportunity for health care providers and parents to lay the foundation of good health and development of the baby. The nature of childcare support and nourishment received by the child in the first 1000 days ensures healthy development at later stages. The present study utilizes content analysis to review government reports, published papers and research articles in the area of childcare and nutritional support at early stages to identify and understand the importance of 1000 days programme on child development. Data from reviewed literature reveal that children often suffer from malnourishment which leads to stunted growth and impaired brain development. Some of the core issues which adversely impact early childhood growth and development have been identified as: a) poor childcare support practices b) lack of access to basic immunization c) poor hygiene and sanitation for mother and child during first 1000 days d) lack of adequate nutritional support. The study findings show that the 1000 days program is a unique program that promotes access to good child rearing practices. It can also help to generate awareness towards the need for healthy food, good childcare practices, maintenance of health and hygiene thereby aiming at supporting and sustaining healthy child development through various simple but highly effective measures.

Keywords: Brain development, Childcare, First 1000 Days programme, Nutrition, Support.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the report prepared by United Nations the first 1000 days offers a critical opportunity window to break the "intergenerational cycle of under-nutrition and deprivation". In this regard the 'first 1000 days task team' has been set up by UNICEF and WHO.

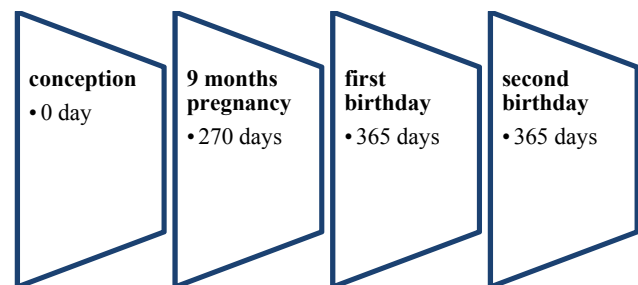


Figure: First 1000 days of life

2. METHOD

A non systematic review of literature sources which included both primary and secondary data sources (national and international) were considered for the present study. Electronic databases like Scopus, Elsevier, SAGE, Medline, IEEE explorer, NDL, Shodhganga were searched using search engine Google with key words: 1000 days, child care, nutrition, early childhood.

3. FINDINGS

UNDERSTANDING POOR CHILD CARE SUPPORT PRACTICES DURING PRENATAL STAGE

The period from conception to delivery is highly critical in the life of every mother. Medical science tells that the pregnant mother has to take care as several prenatal factors have short term and long-term influence on child health, growth and development.

Table: care and precautions during pre-conception and pre-natal stage

Care during pre-conception		Care during pre-natal stage
Do's	Dont's	Do's
Healthy and active lifestyle	Sedentary lifestyle	Avoiding falls, injuries and slips; not lifting heavy weight; regular and moderate exercise
Nutritious food	Fast food/junk food	Eating balanced diet; increased intake of iodine, omega 3 fatty acids and micronutrients
Avoid alcohol and nicotine conception	Alcohol/nicotine consumption	Avoiding alcohol and nicotine products
Control of chronic health conditions	Not taking care in case of diabetes, hypertension, heart diseases	Proper management of chronic health conditions if any
Maintaining healthy body weight	Excess body weight/underweight	Regular prenatal checkup
Taking appropriate health supplements and folic acid tablets	Taking unsupervised medications and health products	Taking all medications under medical supervision
Prevention and treatment of infectious diseases	Non treatment of infectious diseases	Protection from all forms of infectious diseases

UNDERSTANDING POOR CHILDCARE SUPPORT PRACTICE AND LACK OF ADEQUATE NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT DURING NATAL AND POST NATAL STAGES

Chronic under-nutrition or mal-nutrition especially during the first 1000 days leads to under development of the child. It causes stunted physical growth, poor cognitive development, wasting and degeneration of body muscles and affects future development of the baby. Research studies reveal that this critical window of opportunity should be utilized to break the link in the chain of cyclical poverty and malnourishment especially seen in rural areas (First 1000 days, United Nations).

There are numerous benefits of mother's milk for the baby as mentioned below (Why the first 1000 days of life matter, 2018):

- Supports healthy growth and development
- Needed for optimal brain and neuro-development
- Reduces risk of gastro-intestinal and respiratory infections
- Promotes emotional bonding between mother and child
- Risk reduction for maternal breast and ovarian cancer

Table: nutritional needs in first 1000 days (source: 1000 days)

INFANCY	
Breast milk: nature's super-food (0-6 months)	provides essential nutrients, growth factors and hormones during the infancy stage
EARLY CHILDHOOD	
Supplemental food (6 months onwards)	Needed for healthy brain and neurological development, promotion of good physical growth and development
Iron	
Protein	
Zinc	
Iodine	

Table: Supplemental food in first 1000 days (Goyal, 2018)

Sweet potato	Chappati soaked in dal	Boiled and pureed vegetables	Rice water
Porridge	Rice soaked in dal	Stewed apple	Steamed and pureed fruits
Pulse soup	Mashed banana	Home-made single grain cereals	

UNDERSTANDING THE LACK OF ACCESS TO BASIC IMMUNIZATION

Vaccines are globally accepted preventive vehicles for protection against deadly diseases According to Pang (n.d.), several obstacles hinder the objective of global vaccination drives for children in developing countries. The WHO data (2019) reveals that approximately 20 million children remain unreached for global immunization while around 5.9 are partially vaccinated i.e. have not received the 3 doses required within first 365 days..

Some of the chief issues and challenges are:

- Poverty
- Superstitions and misconceptions
- Illiteracy
- Lack of awareness and knowledge
- Faith on curative medication compared to preventive
- Religious beliefs
- Culture and tradition
- Usage of traditional medicines and home remedies

Hence, many children lack basic access to immunization due to several factors. Poverty, lack of parental awareness, lack of access to primary healthcare centers being some of the key concerns.

The review reveals:

- Need for awareness and sensitization campaigns for parents especially first time parents
- Need for door to door vaccination drives for all required immunization doses.

Table: Some common vaccines to be provided during first 1000 days (CDC)

Some common vaccines	
DTap	Diphtheria, Tetanus, Acellular Pertussis.
Hep B	Hepatitis
HIB	<i>Haemophilus influenza</i> Type B
IVP	Inactivated Polio vaccine
MMR	Measles, Mumps, Rubella
OPV	Oral polio vaccine
RV	Rotavirus
VAR	Varicella (chicken pox)

POOR HYGIENE AND SANITATION FOR MOTHER AND CHILD DURING FIRST 1000 DAYS

Table: Hygienic practices (source: Cunha et al. 2015)

Prenatal	Natal	Postnatal
Avoidance of exposure to environmental pollutants	Mosquito nets	Hand-washing and general hygiene
Frequent and proper hand washing procedures to be followed to prevent infections	Avoidance of exposure to environmental pollutants	Mosquito nets
Complete avoidance of primary and passive smoking	Hand washing	No to smoking: primary and passive
Eating hygienically cooked food	No to smoking: primary and passive	Eating hygienically cooked food and properly stored food

Some measures identified through review of literature towards improvement of child nutrition under the first 1000 days programme are:

- Timely provision of mother's milk within first one hour of birth
- Exclusive diet of mother's milk during the first 6 months (180 days)
- Timely introduction of appropriate complementary food in appropriate quantity and frequency
- Safe handling of food and maintenance of hygienic practices
- Timely immunization schedule to be followed strictly to ensure full immunization

- Provision of Vitamin A supplement
- Active feeding and rehydration during and after illness
- Therapeutic care of the child
- Improved nutrient intake of girl child to prevent anemia

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