

## **Abstract**

Nutrition plays a major role in maternal and child health as they are most vulnerable groups for nutritional related problems in life cycle. Poor maternal and infant nutritional status leads to higher maternal and infant mortality, morbidity and adverse birth outcomes. Various factors affect nutrient intake of pregnant women and infant. Consumption of nutritious food depends on nutritional knowledge, attitude and practices of mothers. This cross sectional study was carried out to assess Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) of women regarding nutrition during pregnancy and infant feeding. One hundred pregnant mothers and 100 mothers of infants were recruited as a sample from Maternal and Child Health (MCH) clinics at Pannala Medical Office of Health (MOH) division in Kurunegala district. A pre-tested interviewer administrated questionnaire was used to gather information on nutrition. The mean score for knowledge, attitude and practices were calculated according to the correct response that, were given by the subjects. Based on the mean score, subject were categorised as low and high knowledge, positive and negative attitudes and good and poor practices. Studied pregnant women had good knowledge about important of having Calcium (98%), Folate (86%) and small frequent meals (92%) during pregnancy. However, 12%, 42% and 47% of pregnant mothers knew about energy rich food, major nutrients in animal foods and yellow colour foods respectively. Eighty nine percent of mothers knew about importance of changing dietary pattern during pregnancy and all of them changed by increasing amount of food consumption. More than 90% of mothers had positive attitudes and practices on nutrition. Results regarding infant feeding revealed that all mothers knew about exclusive breast feeding (EBF) time period as up to 6 months but only 73% of them practiced. A majority (97%) of subjects thought that colostrum is good for baby but only 96% gave. Eighty percent of mothers practiced to introduce complementary feeding after 6 months. More than 80% of mothers had positive attitudes regarding infant feeding. Further, results showed that there were no any relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and KAP of mothers regarding nutrition during pregnancy and infant feeding. This study concluded that majority of studied mothers had good knowledge, positive attitudes and appropriate practices regarding nutrition during pregnancy and infant feeding.

**Keywords:** Pregnancy, infant feeding, knowledge, attitudes, practices