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PETCHNAPA ONGTRAKULKIJ : MATERNAL PERCEPTION REGARDING
WATER FEEDING IN 0-4 MONTH OLD BREASTFED INFANTS. THESIS ADVISORS:
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The objective of this research was to study maternal perception regarding water consumption among infants aged 0-4 months. Fifty mothers, aged 20-35 years, with eligible infants who attended a Well Baby Clinic at the National Children Health Institute were selected. Mothers were divided into 6 groups. They were assigned into each group by their socio-economic backgrounds. Data was collected by focal group discussions.

The findings showed that sources of information on breastfeeding were primarily obtained from health care providers during the prenatal and postpartum stages. Most mothers knew the benefits of breastfeeding and the colostrum. However, all of them believed that feeding water to their infants was essential. Their reasons for feeding water were prevention of thirst, dried throat, dehydration, fungus in infant's tongue and improving skin complexion. Furthermore, a few mothers believed that water would help to prevent jaundice and constipation. Many mothers fed water to their infants despite the fact that they had strong intentions to breastfeeding.

As a result, there was no exclusive breastfeeding. Further critical discussions showed that mothers lacked basic knowledge in connection with breastfeeding and the immunological properties of lactoferrin in prevention of milk fungus and prevention of growth of E.coli. Health care providers did not provide all the basic and essential information for promotion of exclusive breastfeeding. Support from the family also encouraged water consumption.

The research findings showed that in order to promote exclusive breastfeeding more effectively, health care providers should put more efforts into providing information about the benefits of lactoferrin. Information presented in the infant's health care booklet should be updated specifically for promotion of exclusive breastfeeding.