

ABSTRACT

Background

Malnutrition is an underlying cause of death of 2.6 million children each year globally, with 1 in 4 of the world's children stunted. An understanding of the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding child feeding by caretakers of children is important in designing major nutritional interventions aimed at reducing the rates of malnutrition among the under 5s. In this study, the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding child feeding by caretakers of children less than 5 years living in Kyamuhunga Sub County, Bushenyi district was assessed.

Methods

This was a descriptive cross sectional study on 320 caretakers of children below 5 years of age. Data on knowledge, attitude and practices regarding child feeding was obtained from the care takers using questionnaire based interviews. Descriptive data were presented as frequencies and illustrated using frequency tables and bar graphs.

Results

Regarding knowledge about child feeding, most caretakers had heard about child nutrition, mainly through radio programs. Only 29% of the caretakers had obtained knowledge about child feeding from health workers. Only 1 in every 4 participants was able to mention all the classes of foods required for proper growth of the child. About 34% knew that carbohydrates were the only food nutrient required for proper child growth. Regarding the consequences of not getting balanced diet, 41% knew that the child would die if he/she is not given balanced diet while 31% knew that the child would get malnourished.

Concerning the attitudes towards child feeding, about 1 in every 3 care takers did not know whether a

child must take milk after six months, whereas 23% strongly disagreed to feeding a child on milk after 6 months. About half of the caretakers disagreed that a child must take 2 meals per day, while 31% of the participants strongly disagreed to feeding children with green vegetables. Notably, every 9 in 10 caretakers disagreed with the idea of children taking milk at 2 months.

About the child feeding practices, 3 in every 4 caretakers had introduced supplementary feeds to their children at 6 months of age, while about 1 in 5 caretakers did not know the right time to introduce supplementary feeds. Over 41% administered solid foods only at 6 months.

Majority (63%) mentioned giving meals to the child 1-3 times a day. Mothers took a bigger role in decision making and food preparation. However for many families, dinner was not served separately to the child, but rather as part of the family meal.

Conclusions and recommendations

The majority of the study participants expressed the need for sensitization of the communities as the most appropriate measure to reduce on the rates of malnutrition in the study area. Thus, major interventions should consider nutritional education as a way of improving caretakers' knowledge of meal preparation for weaning children, attitudes, and practices of child feeding. Additionally, results from the current study highlight the need for health workers' involvement in providing accurate information about child nutrition to the communities.