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A study to assess the minor health problems in under five children and the health seeking measures followed by mothers in selected areas

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Abstract

Background: Most deaths among under five children are still attributable to just a handful of conditions and are avoidable through existing interventions. Diarrhea and acute respiratory tract infection are the most common causes of mortality during the childhood period (Parimi *et al.*, 2004). Minor health problems in under five children can cause serious consequences if there is any delay in seeking appropriate care or not seeking any care. It is the responsibility of the care giver especially the mother to seek appropriate health care without any delay to reduce childhood morbidity and mortality. The current study aimed to assess the minor health problems in under five children and the health seeking measures followed by mothers in selected areas.

Methodology: Research approach used in this study was exploratory in nature and research design used was descriptive design. Samples of the study consisted of mothers of under five children residing at selected community, who fulfilled the inclusion criteria who were selected using non-probability convenient sampling. The data collection tool used in the study was semi-structured interview guide.

Results: 83.3% of the mothers reported that their children suffered from increased frequency of loose stools, 80% of them reported common cold, whereas 66.7% of them reported cough in their children. 50% of the mothers reported refusal to take food or water in their children, whereas 30% of them reported nausea and vomiting. 72.7% of the mothers sought medical advice for rise in body temperature, whereas 64% of them sought the medical advice for increased frequency of loose stools in children. 50% of the mothers sought medical advice for cough in their children, whereas 45.8% of them for common cold in their children. There was a statistically significant association found between minor health problems such as increased frequency of loose stools, rise in body temperature and common cold with demographic variables like age of the mother, education, monthly family income and number of under five children. There was a statistically significant association found between health seeking measures followed by mothers of under five children with diarrhea, with demographic variables of the mother like education, employment, monthly income and type of family.

Conclusion: The present study concluded that mothers play an important role in prevention and management of minor health problems in their children. Even though the mothers of under five children had access to information regarding management and prevention of complications in children, only few mothers followed adequate measures. It is the responsibility of the nurse to reinforce, and educate the mothers on the importance of following various measures that can prevent complications in their children.

Keywords: Assess, minor health problems, under five children, health seeking measures followed by mothers

Introduction

The healthy future of a society depends on the health of children, who are guardians of that future (WHO, 2005). Around 10.6 million children still die every year before reaching their 5th birthday. Most deaths among children of under five years are still attributable to just a handful of conditions and are avoidable through existing interventions. Reduction of the mortality rate in children under the age of five is one of the eight Millennium Developmental Goals of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011) [14]. Since mothers are usually the primary care givers for children especially under five years of age, they should be aware of the management of illnesses in their children, as even minor illnesses increase the childhood morbidity and mortality.

Diarrhoea and acute respiratory tract infection are the most common causes of mortality during the childhood period. In developing countries, children under five years of age have

an average of 3 episodes of diarrhea each year, which makes it the 2nd highest cause of mortality in this age group. In addition, 3 to 5 episodes of acute respiratory tract infection annually affect children less than 5 years of age. According to Graneto, 2011 [12], fever is considered as a serious health issue as it may cause disorders that range from mild condition to the life threatening bacterial and viral illnesses. Other minor health problems that children are commonly affected are itching around the anus, falls, constipation, tooth problems, feeding problems and skin rashes.

Health seeking measures has been defined as any actions undertaken by individuals who perceive themselves to have a health problem or to be ill for the purpose of finding an appropriate remedy. It is influenced by the factors like individual behavior, community norms, socio-cultural and economic factors. Decision making process again depends on the determinants such as level of education, occupation,

income of the head, cost and physical accessibility of services. Based on these factors mothers can choose various health seeking measures for their children such as seeking care at the health facility, following home remedies, depending on drug sellers or previous prescriptions, self-treatment or no treatment.

Objectives

- To assess the minor health problems in under five children in selected areas.
- To assess the health seeking measures by the mothers for the minor health problems in under five children.
- To associate the minor health problems in under five children with selected demographic variables of mother.
- To associate the health seeking measures followed by mothers with selected demographic variables.
- To associate the minor health problems in under five children with health seeking measures followed by mothers.

Assumption

- Minor health problems in under five children will vary.
- The health seeking measures followed by mothers for managing minor health problems will vary.
- The health seeking measures adopted by mothers will be influenced by the minor health problems in under five children.

Methodology

Research approach: Exploratory approach

Research design: Descriptive design

Sampling technique: Non -Probability convenient sampling

Sample size: A total of sixty mothers of under five children were taken for the study.

Settings of the study: Thuraipakkam and Taramani (suburban areas of Chennai)

Data Collection Tool: The data collection tool used in the study was semi-structured interview guide. The tool consisted of two parts.

Part A: Part A had 2 sub parts

Part I: Consisted of questions related to demographic data of the mother

Part II: Consisted of questions related to demographic data of the child.

Part B: Part B consisted of semi-structured interview guide to assess the minor health problems and health seeking measures followed by mothers in under five children.

Procedure

After obtaining permission, data collection for the main study was done in the community area such as Thuraipakkam and Taramani. A total of 60 mothers of under

five children were interviewed during this period. A brief description and introduction was given regarding the purpose of the study to each participant, and the consent was obtained. Using the semi- structured interview guide, the interview was conducted, and the demographic data were collected first, followed by data related to minor health problems and the health seeking measures followed by the mothers in managing these problems in their under five children. The questions were thoroughly explained to the participants. The investigator ticked off against the relevant options based on the participant’s responses. The time taken for each interview was 15 to 20 minutes. The mothers were very cooperative throughout the stud

Results

The findings related to baseline variables of the mothers of under-five children

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of the mothers of under-five children

n=60.

Sl. No	Demographic variables of the mother	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age		
	a. 21-25 years	28	46.7
	b. 26-30 years	20	33.3
	c. 31-35 years	10	16.7
	d. More than 35 years	2	3.3
2	Educational level		
	a. Non-literate	5	8.3
	b. Primary schooling	10	16.7
	c. Secondary schooling	22	36.7
	d. Higher secondary schooling	13	21.7
3	Employment details		
	a. Self-employed/business	15	25.0
	b. Government job	2	3.3
	c. Private job	8	13.3
	d. Unemployed	35	58.3
4	Monthly income of the family		
	a. Less than Rs.5000	15	25.0
	b. Rs.5001-10000	30	50.0
	c. Rs.10001-15000	10	16.7
5	Religion		
	a. Hindu	36	60.0
	b. Christian	22	36.7
	c. Muslim	2	3.3
6	Type of family		
	a. Joint family	32	53.3
	b. Nuclear family	28	46.7
	Both parents present	23	82.1
	Single parent present	5	17.9
7	Number of under-five children		
	a. One	39	65
	b. Two	21	35
	c. Three and above	0	0

Table 1 shows that 46.7% of the samples were in the age group of 21-25 years. 36.7% of the samples had completed secondary schooling whereas 8.3% of the samples were non-literate. 58.3% of the samples were unemployed and 50% of the samples had monthly family income between

Rs. 5001-10000. Majority of the samples (60%) were Hindus, and 53.3% among them were from joint families. Among the samples from nuclear families (46.7%), in

17.9% of the families, only mother was present. The findings related to baseline variables of under-five children

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Demographic Variables of the under-five children

n=60			
Sl. No	Demographic variables of the child	Frequency	Percentage
Age of the child			
1	a. 0-1 year	12	20.0
	b. 1-3 years	32	53.3
	c. 3-5 years	16	26.7
Sex			
2	a. Male	38	63.3
	b. Female	22	36.7
Birth order			
3	a. First	23	38.3
	b. Second	32	53.3
	c. Third	5	8.3
	d. Fourth and above	0	0

Table 2 shows that 53.3% of the children belonged to the age group of 1-3years. Majority (63.3%) of the children were male and 36.7% of the children were female. 53.3% of the under five children were second born whereas 38.3% of

them were first born. Percentage distribution of the minor health problems in under five children

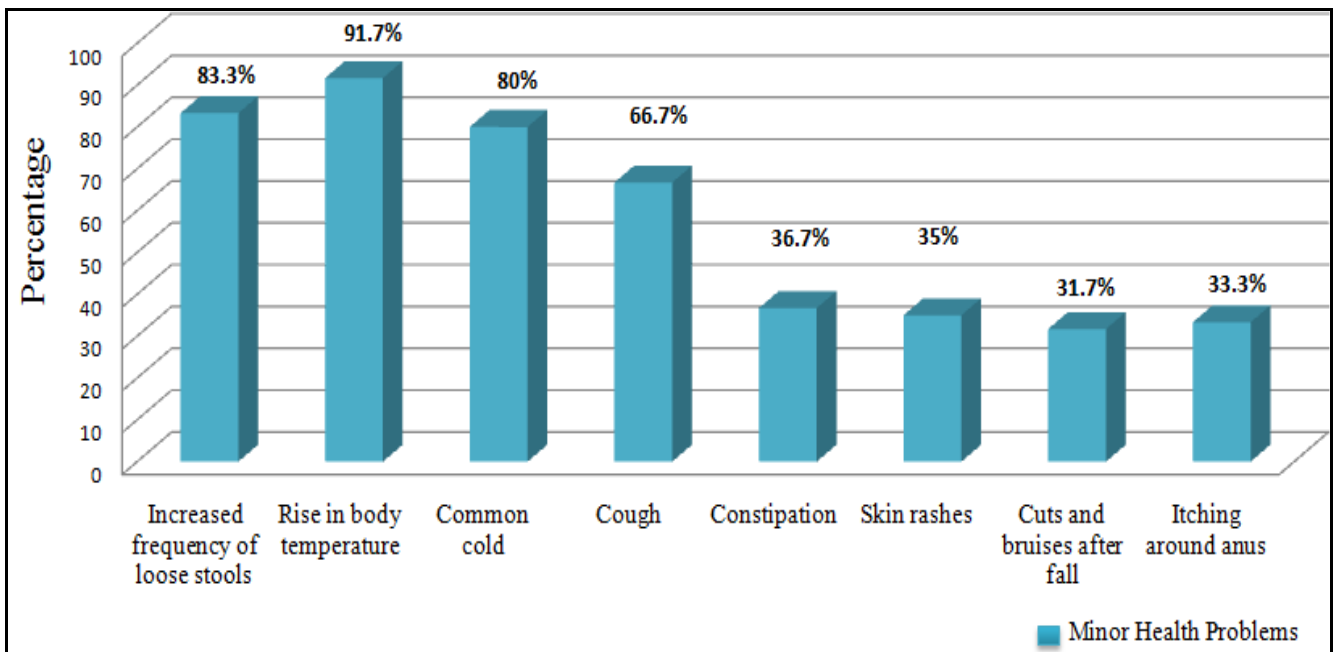


Fig 1: Percentage distribution of the minor health problems in under five children

The above figure shows that majority of the mothers (91.67%) reported that their children suffered from rise in body temperature. 83.3% of the mothers reported that their children suffered from increased frequency of loose stools whereas 80% of them suffered from common cold. Only

31.67% of the mothers reported that their children suffered from cuts and bruises after fall.

Percentage distribution of health seeking measures by mothers of minor health problems in under five children

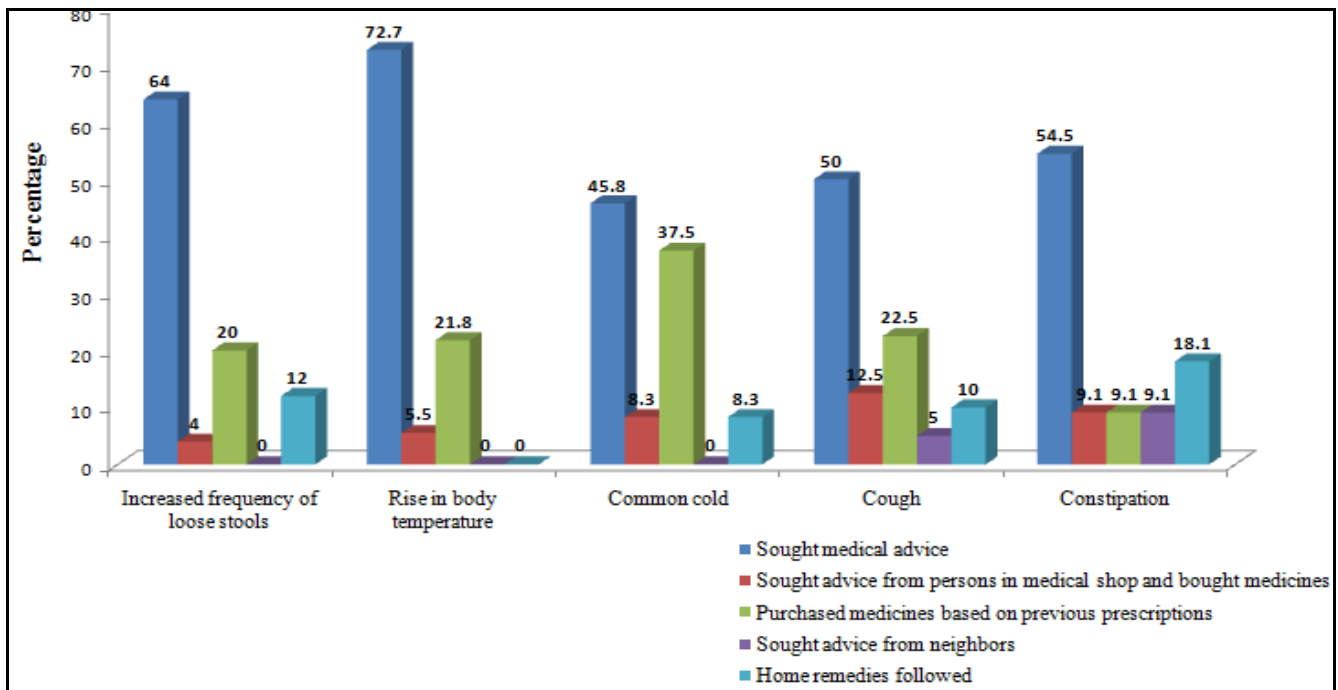


Fig 2: Percentage distribution of the health seeking measures by the mothers for the minor health problems in under five children

The above figure shows that out of 50 children suffered from increased frequency of loose stools (83.3%), 64% of the mothers sought medical advice whereas 20% of them purchased medicines based on previous prescriptions for their children. Out of 55 children with rise in body temperature (91.7%), 72.7% of the mothers sought medical advice, whereas 21.8% of them purchased medicines based on previous prescriptions. Out of 40 children with cough, 20 mothers sought medical advice whereas 12 mothers for constipation out of 22 children.

Association of the minor health problems in under five children with selected demographic variables.

There was a statistically significant association found between minor health problems such as increased frequency of loose stools, rise in body temperature and common cold with demographic variables like age of the mother, education, monthly family income and number of under five children.

Association of the health seeking measures followed by mothers with selected demographic variables.

There was a statically significant association found between health seeking measures followed by mothers of under five children with diarrhea, with demographic variables of the mother like education, employment, monthly income and type of family.

Discussion

The study was conducted to assess the minor health problems in under five children and the health seeking measures followed by mothers in selected areas in Chennai. A total of 60 mothers of under five children in the selected community were chosen for the study. Minor health problems and the health seeking measures followed by mothers were assessed by using a semi structured interview guide. Majority of the mothers (91.67%) reported that their children suffered from rise in body temperature.83.3% of the mothers reported that their children suffered from

increased frequency of loose stools.80% of them reported common cold, whereas 66.7% of them reported cough in their children. This was supported by a study conducted by Hay A D and Heron J (2005) who revealed that during preschool years, all children experienced one or more symptoms, most commonly high temperature, cough, common cold, vomiting or diarrhea. The study findings supported the investigators first assumption “Minor health problems in under five children will vary”.

72.7% of the mothers sought medical advice for rise in body temperature, whereas 64% of them for increased frequency of loose stools in children.50% of the mothers sought medical advice for cough in their children, whereas 45.8% of them for common cold in their children. 100% of the mothers sought medical advice for complaints of pain while urinating in their children, whereas 80% of them for pain in the ear, nose and throat. These findings were supported by a study conducted by Ertmann RK and Siesma V (2011) [13] who revealed that specific symptoms such as fever, ear ache, vomiting, and diarrhea were strongly associated with perception of parents rating their children as sick and would cause them to consult a doctor.

While interacting with mothers, the investigator found that 100% of the mothers will seek medical advice for rise in body temperature and pain while urinating in children, whereas 90% of the mothers sought medical advice for abdominal pain. Mothers will seek advice from persons in medical shop for common cold (33.33%) and itching around anus (30%) in their children. Home remedies will be followed by mothers for cuts and bruises after fall (68.29%), itching around anus (55%) and increased frequency of loose stools (50%). Ertmann RK and Siesma V (2011) [13] conducted a study to assess the reasons underlying parental decisions regarding health seeking behavior of mothers in Saudi Arabia. They concluded that parent’s perception about illness severity was strongly related to the tendency to contact a doctor. Symptoms such as fever, ear ache,

abdominal pain and vomiting were strongly associated with the probability of parents rating the child as ill and would cause the parents to contact a doctor. The above findings highlighted the need for nursing action to educate the mothers regarding the appropriate health seeking measures should be followed by mothers to tackle the minor health problems in under five children.

It was evident from the study that the demographic variables of the mothers like education, occupation, monthly family income and type of family had a significant association with health seeking measures followed by mothers of under five children with diarrhea, whereas age and number of under five children had no significant association with health seeking measures.

The study findings supported the investigators assumption "The health seeking measures followed by mothers for managing minor health problems will vary".

Conclusion

The study was conducted to assess the minor health problems in under five children and the health seeking measures followed by mothers in managing minor health problems. The study findings shows that majority of under five children suffered from minor health problems such as increased frequency of loose stools, rise in body temperature, common cold and cough. It was found that there was a significant association of health seeking measures followed by mothers of under five children with increased frequency of loose stools, with selected demographic variables like education of the mother, employment, motherly income and type of family. The study findings helped the investigator to know the various health seeking practices of mothers in managing minor health problems in their children. Mothers had a significant role in prevention and management of minor health problems in under five children. The key to the prevention of adverse consequences associated with minor problems in children is early management and appropriate health seeking measures by the primary care giver, usually the mother of the children. The health care professionals have to motivate the parents to provide the best possible care and treatment for their children.

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Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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