2005 TAFCS Annual Meeting

87th Annual Meeting

of the
TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES

March 3-5, 2005

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Dallas, Texas

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Annual of Refereed Papers

Texas Association of Family and Consumer Sciences

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THE EFFECT OF BREASTFEEDING EDUCATION ON BREASTFEEDING INITIATION RATES AMONG TEENAGE MOTHERS
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Teenage mothers often have a difficult time successfully accomplishing the tasks of both parenting and adolescents. Breastfeeding is a decision that is generally made during pregnancy. By providing breastfeeding education, the adolescent will be better equipped to make infant feeding decisions.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of a breastfeeding education program on breastfeeding initiation rates, breastfeeding knowledge, and attitude towards breastfeeding among teenage mothers.

Method

A pretest, treatment, post test, control group design was used to measure changes in breastfeeding knowledge, knowledge of the benefits of breastfeeding to mother and baby, attitude towards breastfeeding, and influence on infant feeding choice.

Sample

The study was conducted at an urban high school for pregnant and parenting teens. The sample consisted of 79 adolescent girls between 15 and 19 years of age. Thirty-eight students who attended the high school during the Spring 2003 semester served as the control group. Forty-one students who attended the school during the Fall 2003 semester served as the treatment group.

The ethnicity of the control group was 17.9% White-Caucasian, 42.9% Hispanic-Latino, and 39.3% African American; and the ethnicity of the treatment group consisted of 15.4% White-Caucasian, 44.4% Hispanic-Latino, and 42.3% African American.

Instruments

The instrument was the Breastfeeding Pre- Posttest. Scores on the Breastfeeding Pre- Posttest were based on a Likert scale with possible mean scores ranging from 1 being the lowest to 4 being the highest. The instrument contained 51
questions divided into three subscales: Breastfeeding Knowledge, Breastfeeding Attitude, and Feeding Choice Influence.

**Procedure**

A breastfeeding education program which offered an interactive method of teaching pregnant teens about breastfeeding was used as the treatment in this study. Each participant in the program was assigned a peer mentor, trained by the researcher, to provide support and answer questions as needed. On the first and last week of the program the participants in each group were administered the Breastfeeding Pre-Post Test.

**Results**

The curriculum had a positive effect on breastfeeding initiation rates and breastfeeding knowledge. Breastfeeding initiation was 35.7% in the control group and 85.2% in the treatment group. There was a significant change on the Breastfeeding Knowledge Subscale between the pretest and the posttest for the treatment group but not the control group. There was not a significant change in mean scores on the Breastfeeding Attitude Subscale. Participants who initiated breastfeeding had a significant increase in scores from pretest to posttest on the Breastfeeding Knowledge Subscale, while participants who did not initiate breastfeeding did not.

**Conclusion and Implications**

This study will hopefully prove useful for any education program targeted at teenage mothers. The interactive and fun learning environment created in this breastfeeding education program can be used as a model for educators. This program also gives an example of support for the teenage mother in whatever feeding choice she makes for her baby. By adapting the educational intervention used in this study to the teaching of adolescent mothers, the barriers that influence breastfeeding initiation rates of teenage mothers can be lowered.

**References**


