

## Effects of Nutrition Education on Undernutrition among Children Aged 6 to 36 Months, in Eastern Province of Sri Lanka

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The prevalence of acute undernutrition (wasting) in the Eastern province was 19.4%, which is higher than the average figure for the country (14.8%). This study aims to assess the effectiveness of a nutrition counseling intervention package for the improvement of nutritional status of the preschool children aged 6-36 months in two health districts of the Eastern Sri Lanka. A pre and post intervention study consisting of four cross-sectional quantitative surveys was conducted. The Public Health Midwives were trained on feeding practice counseling and allowed to counsel mothers/care givers for 6 months in the intervention arm. Using stratified cluster sampling method, a sample 1400 children in the baseline survey and 880 children in each arm in the follow up surveys involved. The percentage of the children with wasting below -2SD was reduced by 10.2% for boys and girls together in the intervention arm, in comparison the baseline and 2<sup>nd</sup> follow up surveys. There were significant increases in the mean Z scores of nutritional indicators with higher t-values and lower p-values, as wasting ( $t=-4.12$ ,  $p=.000$ ), stunting ( $t=-6.77$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and underweight ( $t=-8.82$ ,  $p=.000$ ). The nutritional status of children has significant improvement in the intervention arm. Therefore, the nutrition counseling package can be scaled up to other part of the country and similar regions in developing countries.

*Keywords: Infant feeding, nutrition counseling, under nutrition*

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