Food belief practices amongst mothers in Nepal: A qualitative overview

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Background: Mothers in Nepal misunderstand the role of healthy eating to combat nutritional problems leading to improper feeding of young children which can lead to several complications, particularly in preschool-aged children.

Research Questions: What are the maternal views about healthy food? What is the mothers’ food and health seeking behaviours towards preschool aged children? Were the major factors that affect food recommendations?

Methods: A qualitative research comprising seven focus groups of 50 participants in total. Focus groups were recorded and transcribed, translated and the data were analysed using a thematic analysis.

Results: We identified six key themes related to food beliefs: poverty, knowledge, resources, policy, environmental effects, beliefs and cultural influences. All FGDs thought that poor, illiterate and underserved populations are vulnerable and due to poverty, poor knowledge and strongly embedded cultural beliefs & taboos. This study found ‘diversified views’ as a major barrier to food recommendation.

Conclusions: Mothers views appear to be poorly-informed. Both rural and urban women had high faith in spiritual healers. A public health approach is needed to address nutrition problems associated with behaviour. Food behaviour and culture are strongly associated in Nepal, people follow the codes of conduct in relation to food choice, cooking methods and eating and including frequency of meals, time (of meals) and portion size. (FGD: Policy People).

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