ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Trends in breastfeeding indicators in a city of northeastern Brazil[☆]

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Abstract

Objective: To investigate trends in breastfeeding indicators in the city of Feira de Santana, Brazil, and to identify population characteristics that might have influenced this trend.

Methods: Three methodologically comparable cross-sectional surveys performed in 1996, 2001, and 2009 were analyzed. These involved 2,159, 2,319, and 1,471 children younger than 1 year of age who were vaccinated in national multivaccination campaigns in the respective years. A standardized questionnaire was used, containing closed questions on consumption of breast milk and other foods on the day before the survey, along with questions regarding the characteristics of the population.

Results: The annual growth of the breastfeeding indicators was 2.1% for breastfeeding in the first hour of life (from 52.2% to 68.9%); 1.1% for breastfeeding among children aged 9 to 12 months (from 45% to 59.6%); and 0.8% for exclusive breastfeeding among infants younger than 6 months (from 36.9% to 47.4%). The median duration of exclusive breastfeeding increased from 52.3 to 84.3 days, and overall breastfeeding from 278 to 376 days. Some changes in the characteristics of the population were observed, which may have positively influenced the evolution of the breastfeeding indicators (better schooling level among the mothers, less use of dummies/pacifiers, and lower proportions of adolescent mothers), or negatively (greater proportions of primiparous mothers and cesarean deliveries, and lower frequency of births in Baby-Friendly Hospitals).

Conclusion: There were significant advances in breastfeeding indicators, although they are still far from ideal. Changes observed in population characteristics may have positively or negatively influenced this evolution.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE
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Estudos transversais;
Indicadores básicos
de saúde

Tendência dos indicadores de aleitamento materno em uma cidade do Nordeste brasileiro

Resumo
Objetivo: Verificar a tendência dos indicadores de aleitamento materno (AM) em Feira de Santana, Brasil, e identificar características da população que possam ter influenciado essa tendência.
Métodos: Procedeu-se a análise de três inquéritos transversais, metodologicamente comparáveis, realizados em 1996, 2001 e 2009, envolvendo 2.159, 2.319 e 1.471 menores de um ano vacinados na campanha nacional de multivacinação desses anos. Utilizou-se questionário contendo questões sobre o consumo de leite materno e outros alimentos no dia anterior ao inquérito, além de perguntas sobre características da população.
Resultados: O acréscimo anual nos indicadores de AM foi de 2,1 pontos percentuais para o AM na primeira hora de vida (de 52,2% para 68,9%); 1,1 pontos para o AM em crianças de 9 a 12 meses (de 45% para 59,6%); e de 0,8 pontos para o AM exclusivo (AME) em menores de seis meses (de 36,9% para 47,4%). A duração mediana do AME aumentou de 52 para 84 dias, e a de AM de 278 para 376 dias. Observou-se mudanças nas características da população, as quais podem ter influenciado a evolução dos indicadores do AM de forma positiva (melhor escolaridade das mães, decréscimo no uso de chupeta e menor prevalência de mães adolescentes), ou negativa (maior proporção de mães primíparas e de cesarianas, e menor frequência de nascimentos em Hospital Amigo da Criança).
Conclusão: Houve avanços significativos nos indicadores de AM em Feira de Santana, embora ainda estejam longe do ideal. Mudanças observadas nas características da população podem ter influenciado positiva ou negativamente essa evolução.
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Introduction

Considering the impact of breastfeeding (BF) on child health, with significant impact on infant mortality rates,[1] the promotion, protection and support of BF have been increasingly prioritized in public health policies.

In Brazil, several measures have been implemented in the last 30 years, including the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (Iniciativa Hospital Amigo da Criança–IHAC), Kangaroo Care; the creation of the Brazilian Network of Human Milk Banks (Rede Brasileira de Bancos de Leite Humano–BLH); the national commemoration of the World BF Week; the Brazilian Breastfeeding and Feeding Strategy, focused on the encouragement of breastfeeding in primary care; and recently, encouraging the installation of breastfeeding support rooms in the workplaces of nursing women, among others.[2]

As a result of these measures, significant advances have been observed in BF indicators in the country. Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF), which was virtually non-existent in the 1980s, was practiced by 38.6% of mothers of children younger than 6 months in 2006, and the BF median increased from 2.5 months in 1974 to 11.9 months in 2006.[3] The two BF Prevalence Surveys (Pesquisas de Prevalência de Aleitamento Materno–PPAM) in Brazilian state capitals and the Federal District, held in 1999 and 2008,[2,4] showed great variability in BF indicators between the capitals. In the 2008 survey, the median duration of EBF ranged from 0.7 days, in a capital of the Midwest, to 89 days in a Northern capital. The duration of BF ranged from 293 days in São Paulo, to

601 days in Macapá, in North Brazil.[2,4] The comparison of the results of the PPAM in 1999 and 2008 also demonstrated large variations in the indicators' evolution in different capitals. For instance, in Fortaleza there was a decrease in the prevalence of EBF in children younger than 4 months from 57% to 41% and in Campo Grande there was an increase in the prevalence of this indicator from 28% to 62%.[4]

Given the fact that BF indicators and their evolution vary significantly between Brazilian municipalities, it is important for each locality to know and monitor its indicators, assessing trends and factors associated with them. Demographic characteristics are associated with the practice of breastfeeding, such as age, education, parity, maternal employment, place of birth, type of delivery, and pacifier use, among others. The determinants of BF vary in magnitude and effect between different populations.[5,6]

Feira de Santana, in the countryside of the state of Bahia, has been highlighted due to its BF indicators and its work supporting BF. Noteworthy institutions include the city's implementation of the first human milk bank (HMB) in the state and the Breastfeeding Incentive Center (Centro de Incentivo em Aleitamento Materno–CIAMA), references in the state of Bahia, in addition to two IHAC-accredited hospitals, measures that allowed the implementation of actions to promote breastfeeding.[7] In Bahia, there are only six HMBs and eight IHAC-accredited hospitals.

In view of the municipality's commitment to improve their BF indicators and the existence of three BF prevalence surveys with a representative sample, this study aimed to evaluate the trend of BF indicators in that city. In addition,