ABSTRACT

Background of the Study

In a developing country like India, poverty, illiteracy and multiple pregnancies take their toll of mother’s health and that of the breast fed infant. The goal of enhancing the community health can be achieved by preserving the health of mother and child. Child bearing mothers and children are assumed to be a part of weaker segment. In any community, mothers and children constitute a priority group. In sheer numbers they comprise approximately 71.4% of the population of developing countries. In India, women of the child bearing age constitute 22.2% and children under 15 years of age about the 35.3% of the total population. Together they constitute nearly 57.5% of the total population. Maternal mortality and morbidity are significant health problems in developing countries. Improving maternal health has been an essential element for achieving health for all & has been included in millennium developmental goals to be achieved by 2015. RCH is a method of delivering care to special group in the population which is especially vulnerable to disease, disability or death.

Methods

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted to assess the knowledge and practice of Auxiliary Nurse Midwives regarding the reproductive and child health services. The study was conducted in selected rural sub centers of the selected primary health centers at Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh. Multi stage Stratified random sampling technique was adopted for selection of subjects from selected rural sub centers. Of the 17 community blocks, divided as south, east, north and west zone blocks. From the 4 zones, 10 community health blocks were selected (North-3, South-3, East-2 and West-2). From the 10 selected blocks, 25 PHCs were selected by using simple random technique. In the sub-centres of the selected PHCs, the study was conducted. A total of 224 ANMs who fulfilled the inclusion criteria were selected. The data was collected by using structured questionnaire to assess the knowledge and the observation check lists to assess the practice regarding the Reproductive and child health services among ANMs. The conceptual framework was developed by using Nola Pender’s Health Promotion Model. Data collection procedure was carried out for a period of one year and the data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study were interpreted according to the objectives of the present study.

Results

The pretest findings revealed that with regard to over all knowledge, majority of the ANMs, 61.7% had moderately adequate knowledge, only 9.3% had adequate knowledge and 29% had inadequate knowledge regarding RCH services. In relation to the components of RCH services like antenatal services, post natal care, intra natal care majority of them had moderately adequate knowledge. Majority of ANMs had inadequate knowledge regarding IMNCI. In relation to the practice of ANMs regarding RCH services. With regard to over all
practice, among 224 ANMs, 217 (96.9%) had good practice and 7(0.03%) had average practice. There was a good practice observed among majority of the ANMs in antenatal services, postnatal services, newborn care, immunization services and the family planning services. With regard to the practice of IMNCI- classification and illness less than half of them had good practice.

A positive relationship was noted between knowledge and practice of ANMs regarding RCH services. It reveals that the dependent variables are influencing each other in positive direction. A significant association was found between the level of knowledge regarding antenatal services with age, experience and the type of institution studied. Experience was significantly associated with the knowledge regarding intra-natal services, & family planning services and the refresher training was significantly associated with level of knowledge regarding IMNCI. There was a significant association with the practice of postnatal services and IMNCI with experience.

**Conclusion**

This study concludes that majority of the ANMs had moderately adequate knowledge regarding various components of RCH services and with regard to practice there was an inadequate practice observed in classification and management illness as per integrated management of neonatal and childhood illness. Other areas of practice like antenatal care, postnatal, new born care and immunization and family planning services were good. There is a lack of knowledge among ANMs regarding some of the areas in RCH services and IMNCI. The study indicates the need for training programmes on various components of RCH services to enhance the knowledge and practice of ANMs to achieve the goals related to reproductive and child health.

**Key words:** Knowledge; Practice; Childhood illnesses; Auxiliary Nurse Midwives, RCH services