

Poor Infant Feeding Practices and High Prevalence of Malnutrition in Urban Slum Child Care Centres in Nairobi: A Pilot Study.

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Abstract

Little is known about the style and quality of feeding and care provided in child day-care centres in slum areas. This study purposively sampled five day-care centres in Nairobi, Kenya, where anthropometric measurements were collected among 33 children aged 6–24 months. Mealtime interactions were further observed in 11 children from four centres, using a standardized data collection sheet. We recorded the child actions, such as mood, interest in food, distraction level, as well as caregiver actions, such as encouragement to eat, level of distraction and presence of neutral actions. Of the 33 children assessed, with a mean age of 15.9 ± 4.9 months, 14 (42%) were female. Undernutrition was found in 13 (39%) children with at least one Z score < -2 or oedema (2): height for age < -2 (11), weight for age < -2 (11), body mass index for age < -2 (4). Rates of undernutrition were highest (9 of 13; 69%) in children aged 18–24 months. Hand-washing before the meal was lacking in all centres. Caregivers were often distracted and rarely encouraged children to feed, with most children eating less than half of their served meal. Poor hygiene coupled with non-responsive care practices observed in the centres is a threat to child health, growth and development. **Keynotes:** early years, responsive feeding, hygiene practices, severe undernutrition, nursery, Kenya

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