

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

4.1 Discussion

Maternal and infant care was the continuous service including delivery, postpartum, discharge from hospital and postnatal visit for postpartum checkup in order to ascertain that postpartum mothers and infants were healthy, deprived of complications and have good quality of life. This study of the postpartum maternal care services evaluation aimed to improve the knowledge of postpartum mothers in self-care and infant care after they receive the services. The study also monitored the postpartum mothers' health practices in the following aspects; having postpartum health checkup as scheduled, cervical cancer screening, family planning, breastfeeding and the use of supplement food.

The study revealed that their knowledge in self-care and infant care was improved after they had received the postpartum maternal care services. Before receiving the service, 53.33% of PP mother had knowledge in "good" level, ranging from 32-40 points (mean 31.4, SD = 3.3). The lowest score was 24 points and the highest was 36 points. On the other hand, after receiving the service, 93.33% of

postpartum mothers gained more knowledge and the score fell in the range of 32-40 points (mean 35.4, SD = 2.6) and 30 points was the lowest score and 39 was the highest. There was a statistical significantly difference with p value = 0.00. This indicates that the postpartum maternal care services helped the postpartum mothers gain more knowledge.

Most of their knowledge that was accurate concerned eating food, taking a rest, prevention of complications and there were two topics that they had mistaken knowledge and needed to be corrected. The first was the use of lochia discharge drug. Their relatives who used to take the drug advised postpartum mothers to try it because it would facilitate the discharge of lochia. This result was in accordance with the outcome of a survey conducted in division of health promotion and health behaviors and children in Ayutthaya (1993) which reported that 46% of postpartum mothers in Ayutthaya took drug release lochia discharge. It might result from their misunderstanding of self-care and the mistaken knowledge that the drug could contribute to the uterine contraction and the smooth release of lochia. The second was about supplement food. It was found that 80-90% of postpartum mothers had the correct understanding in the best time to start supplement food which was the age four months and the food must be well cut up and softened. The use of supplement food should begin with one meal per day. Rice and mashed banana must be fed only when the infant aged four months. However, the study found that 51.1% of the infant were fed supplement food at the age of four months, 46.7% took supplement food at the age of three months and 2.2% at the age of two months. This showed that knowledge gaining of the mothers didn't affect their health practice. Most mothers still believed in

the advice of the elderly. This is due to Thai culture that the inferiors are taught to respect the superiors. As a result, they didn't practice the infant care correctly although they were educated. Generally the use of supplement food is one of infant health problems happening in any region. Most mothers knew that they should start feeding supplement food when the infant is three months old. However, they started the supplement food early because the infant was crying. Their neighbors and relatives suggested them to start feeding rice and banana because the infant was hungry as they were fed exclusively on breast milk. If the infant was fed on rice and banana, the infant's stomach would be full and could sleep longer and the infant doesn't cry. Moreover, the infant would gain weight and would be healthy. Even though they were recommended by doctors and nurses, when the infant was crying, those mothers took the advice of their relatives and parents who had children before. This is in accordance with the survey of the division of health promotion and maternal and infant health behaviors in Ayutthaya (1993) which found that 89.3% of the infants were fed with supplement food and 41.3% of the infants first took the supplement food at the age of three months and 33.7% receiving the supplement food at the age less than three months. This might result from the mother's misunderstanding about the use of supplement food.

This study also found that postpartum mothers had mistaken knowledge of supplement food on its benefits. Sixty percent of them thought the use of supplement food was contributed to the infant's weight gaining. Consequently, those who would like their infant to gain weight started supplement food early as they thought that fat baby was cute and healthy. There are three real benefits of supplement food. First,

supplement food is used to prevent the nutrition deficiency. Breast milk alone cannot be sufficient food. The supplement food assists the physical growth and development of the baby so that the baby is physical growing continually. Second, feeding the supplement food can help shape appropriate eating habits which start at this age. If the infant is trained to eat good food, the infant will have healthy eating habits. Third, the supplement food can help build and strengthen the development of digestive system, absorbing system and other eating-related systems. So, maternal education must take into consideration of beliefs, customs and respects of the elderly and obstacles in passing correct information about maternal and infant care must be eradicated. In addition, other factors; such as, types of food appropriate to the infant must be considered. Only rice and banana were the supplement food that most mother know and they had no idea when they should feed the infants vegetable, fruit, meat and egg. Moreover, hygiene should be emphasized to prevent diarrhea diseases.

Postpartum checkup should be conducted 4-6 weeks after delivery to assess the health of mothers and examine the physical and mental abnormalities. The mothers' adjustment with the surroundings should also be assessed as it is the period that their organs return to the pre-pregnancy condition. This study found that all PP mothers had postpartum checkup, rising from the number found in the report of the department of health promotion and maternal and infant behaviors of Ayutthaya (1993) which found that only 55% of postpartum mother received postpartum services. Postpartum mothers who had the postpartum maternal care also received family planning service except those who were sterilized. Thirty-five mothers received the service at the hospital and ten at the health center. The result showed that all mothers were healthy and didn't have

any abnormalities. In addition, their wounds were dry and well healed and their organs in the pelvis returned to the normal pre-pregnancy condition. All of them were emphasized about family planning and the time to have sexual intercourse. After the postpartum checkup, they were recommended to practice contraception and they received advice in breastfeeding and also resolution to the mothers' problems were given.

Family planning should be conducted in 6-8 weeks after delivery which is the best time because it is the time that their organs return to normal condition and although they don't have menstruation yet, they may be pregnant. According to the report on pregnancy in postpartum non-menstruation period, it was found that 10% of the women was pregnant within 4-12 months and the primal factor was ovulation (Vorrherr H. Puerperium: 1986). So, if the mothers were not aware of this and don't practice family planning in this period, they may be pregnant again when they were not ready to have another child. The international family planning project also aims to promote family planning among postpartum mothers (Rosenenfield and Warakamiin: 1972) because the mothers have just experienced the delivery process and must feed their infant and should practice family planning. In the economic crisis, most mothers prefer to have 1-2 children and as a result they seriously intend to have family planning and decide to select types of contraception to refrain from childbearing. It was found that 51.1 percent of mothers selecting contraceptive injection and 13.6 percent having female sterilization. According to the data of Ayutthaya Provincial Health Office in 1999, it was found that 84.8 of females of childbearing age practicing family planning and 21.8% selecting permanent type of contraception and 68.1% preferred the temporary

type. For those choosing the temporary type, 41.6% using contraceptive tablets and 25.5% using contraceptive injection.

Regarding to cervical cancer screening, it was found that thirty-five postpartum mothers who received postpartum checkup at the hospital had cervical cancer screening, accounting for 77.8%. This result indicated the success of the fourth objective as the checkup rate increased from the pre-service which found that only 30% of postpartum mothers having cervical cancer screening. For the ten cases who didn't have cervical cancer screening, they went to have postpartum checkup at the health center where cervical cancer screening was not available and the health personnel suggested them to check at the hospital. However, after visiting them at their houses, the researcher found that they still didn't have cervical cancer screening. They said they were afraid of the screening, they didn't have time and it was inconvenient for them to go to the hospital as they had to take a day off from work and as a result, they didn't get the wage but had to pay for medical expenses and had to wait for a long time as the checkup at the hospital had many procedures, comparing to that of the health center. Some mothers were not self-employed, so they had to go to work and had to take a day off if they wanted to visit the hospital. It was not convenient for them to go to the hospital. Pap smear (papanicolaou smear) is the method to check for cervical cancer in the beginning stage and the process is simple, requires less time and less cost.

Postpartum mothers usually have wounds in the area of cervix which can happen during pregnancy, delivery and the first six weeks after the delivery. Pap smear should be conducted only in those who were previously diagnosed having carcinoma

insitu during their pregnancy due to the changes of membranes in the cervix area which should return to the normal condition after the delivery (Obstetric nursing, MOPH). Conducting pap smear can diagnose the cancer in the early stage and can reduce the chance of cervical cancer development for more than 50 percent (Gynecology, 1996). American Cancer Society (ACR) recommends people to have pap smear test since the age of 20 or if a person has sexual intercourses frequently, s/he should have the test every year. If the result of pap smear is normal, s/he should repeat the test every three years until the age of 65 years. Had the risk been high, s/he is recommended to test more frequently.

So, if pap smear related equipment can be procured and health personnel are trained to be able to perform the pap smear test, this could help all postpartum mothers to have cervical cancer screening at the health center and it also assists all women to be early diagnosed of cancer and have more chances to fully recover from the cancer (Tomkinson: 1978).

Regarding to breastfeeding, this study found that 55.6% of mothers feeding their infant with breast milk for four months, 13.3 breastfeeding their infant for three months, 17.8% nursing their infant for two months and 13.3% feeding breast milk for one month. This result was in accordance with the survey of Sutthaya province in a department of health promotion and maternal and child behaviors (1993) which found that most mothers fed their infant with breast milk (86.7%) Regarding to those who breastfed, 43.3% nursing the infant for less than three months, 10% feeding for three months and 20.6% feeding breast milk for 4-6 months. These figures showed that the

percentage of mothers feeding breast milk less than three months was the highest as the mothers had to work outside their houses, resulting in less time to breastfeed their infant.

Postpartum mothers in this study were different in education level, occupation, economic status which can be factors that forced them to look for a job outside their homes. Some got the job with holidays; such as, jobs in industry factories and some mothers had the job with no holidays; such as, merchandisers. Being an employee requires the plan for feeding the infant and the mothers were afraid that the infant would have addiction to the breast milk. They had to leave the infant with their relatives or babysitters who looked after the infant based on their previous experiences in childcare. The relatives and babysitters often used powder milk instead of breast milk and started feeding the infants with supplement food early, based on their belief that the supplement food could make the infant sleep longer, not cry and gain weight and fat of which they value as pretty. In addition, supplement food advertisement lured the mothers to buy the food products for the infant and start using it early before four months, especially in case that the mothers leave their infant with their relatives in upcountry because they had to work and couldn't look after the infant. When the infant stayed with the mother who had to work, either in daytime or nighttime, some mothers used power milk while they were working and couldn't nurse them. This was in accordance with the study of Wandee Warawit and Thanya Maneechai which found that employed mothers had to stop breastfeeding and used power milk or mixing power milk with breast milk since the infant aged 1-2 months while mothers who were housewives could breastfeed for the longer period of time.

4.2 Conclusion

Not only did postpartum maternal care service provide education for postpartum mothers in self-care and newborn baby care but it also helped increase the number of PP checkup, family planning and cervical cancer screening, breastfeeding for four months and the use of supplement food with the infant at the age of four months. So, this study helps shape the model of postpartum maternal and infant care service. Postpartum maternal and infant care is the continuous service which reminds mothers of the importance of self-care and continual infant care. In addition, the maternal care stimulated the mothers to have postpartum checkup, plans for childbearing restraint, have cervical cancer screening and pay attention to breastfeeding for four months as breast milk is the best nourishment for the infant. When the infant is four months old, it is recommended to start the supplement food to promote the healthiness of the infant and to prevent the nutrient deficiency for the infant's continuing growth.