**A Qualitative Analysis of Knowledge, Perception and Practices related to Human Milk Banking among Staff Nurses and Lactating mothers, in a tertiary care hospital in South India**

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**Abstract**

**Background:-** Breast-feeding is irrefutably the best form of nourishment for neonatal age groups. Banked human milk may be a suitable alternative for infants when mothers own milk is not available. However there is resistance among lactating mothers regarding human milk donation. So this study was done to find knowledge gaps, perception myths and practice concerns related to staff nurses of NICU and lactating mothers.

**Materials and Methods**:- Semi Structured interviews and Focused Group Discussions were conducted among 16 Staff Nurses and 37 lactating mothers regarding their knowledge, perceptions and milk banking practices. These were coded using Microsoft word & Qualitative Analysis was done to understand the possible barriers to milk donation in our setting.

**Results:-** Staff nurses opined that DHM is safe and lifesaving. Challenges faced were limited supply of DHM because of low awareness on milk donation, shortage of trained staff, and less equipments. They stated that although most mothers were comfortable in donating milk, few were reluctant to donate milk as they feared shortage of milk for their own babies, or pain by use of machine for milk expression. Recipient mothers accepted use of DHM but had concerns about donor mothers’ health and hygiene and measures for ensuring milk safety. Most grandmothers and fathers were resistant towards donating milk for the bank. Staff nurses shared opinions for scale-up, like improving awareness and infrastructure, lactation counselling by skilled personnel and improvement of family support.

**Conclusion:-** There is a need to scale up the Human Milk Banking practices in Low Middle Income Countries. For this, behaviour change communication targeted at mothers and family members about milk donation with help of IEC materials, skill based counselling & building trust among them is necessary.