

The nutritional status of young children and feeding practices two years after Wenchuan earthquake in the worst-affected areas in China

Junsheng Huo, Jing Sun, Jian Huang and Suying Chang

Institute of Nutrition and Food Safety, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, China

This study was carried out to investigate the nutritional status and feeding practices of young children in the worst-affected areas in China two years after Wenchuan Earthquake. The sample consisted of 1,254 children 6-23 months of age living in four selected counties from the disaster-affected provinces of Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu. Length-for-age, weight-for-age, weight-for-length, and hemoglobin concentration were used to evaluate nutritional status. Interviews with selected children's caretakers collected basic demographic information, children's medical history, and child feeding practices. The stunting, underweight, and wasting prevalence rates in children 6-23 months of age were 10.8%, 4.9% and 2.8% respectively, and the anemia prevalence was 52.2%. Only 12.3% of children had initiated breastfeeding within the first hour after birth. Overall, 90.9% of children had ever been breastfed, and 87% children 6-8 months of age had received solid, semi-solid or soft foods the day before the interview. The diets of 45% of children 6-23 months of age met the definition of minimum dietary diversity, and the diets of 39% of breastfed and 7.6% non-breastfed children 6-23 months of age met the criteria for minimum meal frequency. The results highlight that a substantial proportion of young children in the earthquake affected disaster areas continue to have various forms of malnutrition, with an especially high prevalence of anemia, and that most feeding practices are suboptimal. Further efforts should be made to enhance the nutritional status of these children. As part of this intervention, it may be necessary to improve child feeding practices.

Biography

Junsheng Huo has engaged in research of functional assessment, analytical method, effective observation and promotion on food fortification, functional food and other health promotion food for more than 20 years. He has worked on national nutrition intervention projects which aimed to eliminate the micronutrients deficiency i.e. food fortification and supplementation programs. He works also in food standard, nutrients guidelines and micronutrients metabolism. He has published more than a hundred scientific papers and 17 nutrition books. He is also the responsible person in trace elements subcommittee, Chinese nutrition society; in food fermentation subcommittee, Chinese microorganism society; in grain and oil nutrition subcommittee, Chinese grain and oil society etc.

jshuo@263.net.cn