

Social Marketing - An Integrated and Comprehensive Nutrition Communication Strategy to Improve the Iron Nutriture among Preschool Children

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Abstract : Anaemia is one of the world's most widespread health problems. Prevalence of anemia in south Asia is among the highest in the world. Iron deficiency anemia accounts for almost 85 percent of all types of anemia in India and affects more than half of the total population. Women of childbearing age particularly pregnant women, infants, preschool children and adolescents are at greatest risk of developing iron deficiency anemia. In India, 74 percent children between 6-35 months of age are anemic. Children between 1-6 years in major cities are found with a high prevalence rate of 64.8 percent. Iron deficiency anemia is not only a public health problem, but also a development problem. Its prevention and reduction must be viewed as investment in human capital that will enhance development and reduce poverty. Ending this hidden hunger in the form of iron deficiency is the most important achievable international health goal. Eliminating the underlying problem is essential to the sustained elimination of the iron deficiency anemia. The intervention programmes toward the sustained elimination need to be broadly based so that interventions become accepted community practices. Hence, intervention strategies need to go well beyond traditional health and nutrition systems and based upon empowering people and communities so that they will be capable of arranging for and sustaining an adequate intake of foods with respect to iron, independent of external support. Such strategies must necessarily be multisectoral and integrate interventions with social communications, evaluation and surveillance. The main objective of the study was to design a community based Nutrition intervention using theoretical framework of social marketing to sustain improvement of iron nutriture among preschool children. In order to carryout the study eight rural communities In Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh, India were selected. A formative research was carryout for situational analysis and baseline data was generated with regard to demographic and socioeconomic status, dietary intakes, Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of the mothers of preschool children, clinical and hemoglobin status of the target group. Based on the formative research results, the research area was divides into four groups as experimental area I,II,III and control area. A community based, integrated and comprehensive social marketing intervention was designed based on various theories and models of nutrition education/ communication. In Experimental area I, Nutrition intervention using social marketing and a weekly iron folic acid supplementation was given to improve iron nutriture of preschool children. In experimental area II, Social marketing alone was implemented and in experimental area III Iron supplementation alone was given. No intervention was given in control area. The Impact evaluation revealed that among different interventions tested, the integrated social marketing intervention resulted best outcomes. The overall observations of the study state that social marketing, an integrated and functional strategy for nutrition communication to prevent and control iron deficiency. Various theoretical frame works / models for nutrition communication facilitate to design culturally appropriate interventions thus achieved improvements in the knowledge, attitude and practices there by resulting successful impact on nutritional status of the target groups.

Keywords : anemia, iron deficiency, social marketing, theoretical framework

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