



Traditional practice as a cause of infant morbidity and mortality in Juba area (Sudan).

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Abstract: 80 children admitted to the emergency department of Sabbah Children's Hospital, Juba, Sudan, with gastroenteritis were included in this study designed to shed some light on the prevalence of extraction of so-called "false" teeth, Lugbara teeth, and on the extent to which it affects infant morbidity and mortality in the Juba area. Each mother was asked if her child's Lugbara teeth had been extracted and, if so, the cause for and time of their removal. 110 mothers were interviewed; 69 of the mothers had children admitted to Sabbath Children's Hospital for various illnesses, and 41 were members of the hospital staff. Of the 80 children admitted with gastroenteritis, 56 (70%) had their canines extracted following an attack of diarrhea and vomiting; only 24 (30%) did not have them removed. Of the 56 children whose teeth were extracted, 3 developed serious complications. A 6-month-old boy with diarrhea and vomiting had his canines extracted by a drunken woman and was brought to the hospital with profuse bleeding from the site and lacerations of the gum. He was saved by intravenous fluids and blood transfusions. An 8-month-old boy had his canines removed following diarrhea and vomiting. The operation was performed by a woman who used a nail without sterilizing it. The child developed tetanus after 7 days and died in the hospital. A 5-month-old girl with fever, diarrhea, and vomiting had had upper canines removed. She was brought to the hospital 4 days later and was febrile, dehydrated, and had penetrating infected wounds at the site of the extracted canines. She died from septicemia after 2 days. Of the 99 mothers who arranged the removal of the teeth of their children, 96 (97%) did so because of diarrhea and vomiting and only 3 (3%) did so because of fever. 99 mothers indicated that the teeth were extracted by an old woman or man in their area who used an unsterilized nail, and 38 (38.4%) admitted that an old woman or man in their area had performed the extractions using a hoo iron bar or bicycle spoke. Only 3 (3%) admitted that a medical assistant extracted the teeth of their children using sterilized instruments. The remaining 25 (25.3%) did not know the method used by the operator to remove the teeth. 87 (87.9%) paid a fee for the extraction ranging from 2-5 Sudanese pounds. 70 (70.7%) of the mothers whose infants' teeth were extracted claimed that the diarrhea and vomiting stopped; 29 (29.3%) admitted failure of the operation to stop the diarrhea and vomiting.

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