

Integrated health care for sick toddlers: A community approach to improving child health



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Abstract: Toddlers as a vulnerable group, experience rapid physical growth and cognitive development. This process is influenced by various factors such as nutritional intake, stimulation and health monitoring which play a significant role in determining the quality of child development in the future. The purpose of this community service activity is to increase the knowledge of mothers as companions for toddlers in their growth and development process. This activity was carried out in the working area of the Binanga Health Center, Mamuju City, West Sulawesi. The method of the activity carried out was a 30-minute counseling session presented by 2 presenters on caring for sick toddlers. The activity was carried out on December 16, 2024 and was attended by 20 counseling participants. The results of this activity showed that mothers understood and were able to independently manage care for sick toddlers at home.

Keywords: Care, sick toddlers, community, child health.

1. Introduction

Toddlers, defined as children aged 0 to 5 years, experience very rapid physical growth and cognitive development. During this period, various factors such as nutrition, stimulation, and health monitoring play a significant role in determining the quality of children's future development (Catur Utami et al., 2023; Jannah, 2023; Rochmawati et al., 2023).

Midwifery care for sick toddlers is an important aspect of health services that aims to improve welfare and reduce morbidity and mortality in children. Toddlers, defined as children under five years of age, are a group that is very vulnerable to various diseases, including acute respiratory infections (ARI) and diarrhea, which are the main causes of death among children in developing countries (Ikasari & Pusparina, 2024; Nadiyah et al., 2020). Therefore, the role of midwives in providing comprehensive and sustainable midwifery care accompanied by parental/family knowledge is very vital.

Family empowerment is an integral part of midwifery care for sick toddlers. Through counseling and assistance, midwives can increase family knowledge about the importance of balanced nutrition, warning signs of disease, and clean and healthy living practices (PHBS) (Eny Retna Ambarwati, 2019). This is very important, especially in the context of disease prevention and home care, which can reduce the risk of disease recurrence in toddlers. Overall, midwifery care for sick toddlers requires a holistic and integrated approach, involving ongoing health monitoring, family education, and community empowerment. Thus, it is hoped that the morbidity and mortality rates in toddlers can be reduced, and their quality of life can be improved.

2. Materials and Methods

The method of implementing this community service activity is an initial socialization to inform that a community service activity will be held by all academicians of the St. Fatimah Mamuju Health and Business Institute in the Binanga Health Center work area (village auditorium). Followed by the preparation of tools, materials, souvenirs that will be used/given during the activity. This activity was attended by 15 counseling participants, namely groups of breastfeeding mothers and mothers who have toddlers (under five years old). In order to obtain information/counseling materials about caring for sick toddlers independently at home.

3. Results and Discussion

In this community service activity, researchers focused on providing appropriate care to sick toddlers, which is an important topic in child health services (Jannah, 2023). Toddlers are an age group that is very vulnerable to various diseases,



so the care provided must be appropriate and targeted, both from a medical and psychosocial perspective (Agustari et al., 2022).

Care for sick toddlers involves a holistic approach, including monitoring physical conditions, administering medication according to dosage, and paying attention to the child's emotional needs (Mayestika & Hasmira, 2021). This care must involve parents or caregivers in the daily care process, by providing an understanding of the danger signs and steps to take when a toddler experiences worsening health conditions.

Early detection of symptoms of illness in toddlers is very important to prevent the development of more serious diseases. Some symptoms to watch out for include high fever, severe cough, respiratory problems, diarrhea, and dehydration (Ardinasari E., 2016). We provide counseling to parents on simple ways to monitor their child's health condition, as well as when to take their child to a health facility for further examination.

Parents play a central role in the recovery process of sick toddlers. In addition to providing medication as recommended by the doctor, parents also need to maintain the comfort and cleanliness of the child's environment, provide nutritious food, and ensure that the child gets enough sleep and rest. Good communication between medical personnel and parents is essential to provide optimal care (Hastuti, 2021).

Proper nutritional intake while a child is sick is essential to support the recovery process. Sick toddlers often have a decreased appetite, so it is important to provide food with a texture that is easy to digest and highly nutritious (Kelurahan et al., 2024). We also provide education to parents on the importance of providing fluids to prevent dehydration, and teach them how to prepare nutritious food that is still appropriate for the child's condition.

Preventing infection in sick toddlers is also a major focus of this activity. We educate parents on ways to prevent the spread of disease, such as maintaining hand hygiene, wearing masks when caring for children, and maintaining distance from healthy family members. In addition, it is also important to pay attention to the child's immunization schedule as an effort to prevent disease.

Regular monitoring of the health condition of sick toddlers is an equally important part of care. We teach parents to record the development of their child's condition, both those that show improvement and those that worsen, to be reported to medical personnel. Thus, follow-up steps can be taken immediately if necessary.

Through this activity, it is hoped that the community can have a better understanding of the right care for sick toddlers. In addition, we also strive to increase awareness of the importance of preventive measures and proper treatment for sick toddlers at the family level. The evaluation we conducted showed an increase in parents' understanding of how to care for sick toddlers, as well as being better prepared to recognize symptoms of illness that require further medical attention.



Figure 1. Group photo of counseling participants

4. Conclusions

Community service activities focused on caring for sick toddlers show that a holistic approach is essential in dealing with toddler health. Toddlers are an age group that is very vulnerable to disease, so care that involves medical, psychosocial, and family empowerment aspects has proven to be important to support children's health and well-being.

Providing counseling to parents regarding early detection of disease symptoms, how to care for sick toddlers at home, and preventing infection has increased their understanding of the importance of an active role in maintaining children's health. Parents are also more aware of the importance of providing proper nutrition, maintaining environmental cleanliness, and communicating with medical personnel to support the child's recovery process.

The evaluation results show that the community, especially parents, are better prepared to handle and prevent serious health conditions in toddlers through the knowledge that has been provided. This shows that a family education-based approach is effective in improving the quality of care for sick toddlers.

Recommendations in the form of strengthening family education are carried out continuously for parents regarding the care of sick toddlers, related to early detection of disease symptoms and initial steps for home care. Increasing access to health information and care for sick toddlers will greatly assist parents in understanding the conditions and immediate actions taken immediately for toddlers who experience health problems at home before being taken to the nearest health service. Educational programs that are given regular monitoring are also important to ensure the application of knowledge that has been given in the counseling and training program. Integration of the program with integrated health posts and health centers can also expand the reach of the community that benefits from this program.

Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest

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