

# The benefit of using growth chart to evaluate the nutritional status of preschool age children

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## Abstract

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The purpose of this cross-sectional research was to study the benefits of using growth charts for the evaluation of the nutritional status of preschool children, and to assess the role of health personnel and caregivers in using growth charts. The subjects were children aged between birth and five years, their caregivers, local nurses, and health officers.

The subjects were 407 children, 49.4% of whom were male. Their average age was 40.9 months. The results showed that 66.8% of the children were well-proportioned, 74.9% had proper weight, and 74.2% had proper height. The results also revealed more malnutrition cases than are found in official reports. Among the 407 caregivers, 88.7% were aware of the benefits of growth charts, 87.5% were instructed by health personnel or volunteers on how to make benefit from the growth charts, and 8.6% were instructed but did not understand. For nurses/health officers, 85.7% have high to highest levels of understanding and confidence in the use and interpretation of growth charts, and 78.5% are highly confident in their ability to explain the growth charts to caregivers. For health personnel, 57.1% had attended a training program about growth charts more than two years prior to the study, and 42.9% had never been trained. In addition 49.9% of health volunteers had attended a training program about growth charts more than two years ago, and 42.9% had never been trained. The study found that although growth charts were used by the majority, they were not used to their full potential as incomplete data were found in the system. The recommendation is that knowledge management at both the policy and public levels should be stressed so that growth charts can be used effectively and to their full extent.

**Keywords:** growth chart, evaluation of nutritional status of children, caregiver, health personnel