

Training Health Professionals about Breastfeeding

The San Diego Lactation Programme

AUDREY NAYLOR
RUTH WESTER

KNOWLEDGEABLE health care providers are the key to promoting and protecting breastfeeding. Unfortunately, attention to lactation and breastfeeding in the education of health professionals has declined during the past 30 years. Obstetrics teaches methods of inhibiting lactation, while paediatrics concentrates on how to use breastmilk substitutes. If the decline in breastmilk is to be successfully reversed, health professional education must include training about breastfeeding.

For the last 9 years, the San Diego Lactation Programme has been providing such training for health care students and professionals. Directed by a physician nurse team, the programme is based at the University of California San Diego Medical Centre, and Mercy Hospital, an affiliated teaching hospital. A paediatric nutritionist is also part of the core faculty. The team approach is an important aspect of the Lactation Specialist Training Programme. Each discipline makes unique and interrelated contributions to meeting the needs of perinatal breastfeeding families. This approach also strengthens the continuity of service and teaching.

In 1983, the Lactation Programme expanded its activities to include training of physician-nurse teams from developing countries. Participants are physician-nurse teams with responsibilities for both teaching and providing perinatal care in teaching hospitals. The programme's 4 major components provide a variety of clinical and programme experience for participants.

1. *Prenatal guidance*: Trainees observe a well-trained prenatal staff. They learn to provide nutrition guidance and help pregnant women prepare for breastfeeding.

2. *Management of breastfeeding in the postpartum and infant care special units*: Support for normal lactation physiology is demonstrated in the postpartum unit. Policies and procedures encourage early and on-demand feeding and exclude the routine use of formula, water, bottles, pacifiers and nipple shields. Breastfeeding mothers are not sent home with discharge packs of infant formula. Instead, they receive a "gift" of careful counselling. Parents with infants in the special care nursery are instructed about techniques for the development and maintenance of lactation, effective methods of pumping and expressing milk, proper breast care and maternal nutrition. Instruction is also given on methods of storage and transport of breastmilk.

3. *Telephone consultation*: A 24-hour telephone

consultation service is available to any breastfeeding family in the community. Programme staff answer questions, solve acute nursing problems, visit mother-in-fant couples and provide a support system that is always available. Community health professionals also often seek consultation via this service.

4. *Lactation clinic*: The clinic provides an opportunity for trainees to understand the complex physiology of lactation, the multi-determined and learned nature of successful breastfeeding, the interdependent biologic partnership of the mother-infant couple and the family's influence on breastfeeding. They become comfortable with material breast examinations and learn the importance of observing nursing technique carefully. Trainees learn physiologically sound methods of preventing and treating common breastfeeding problems, such as let-down inhibition, engorgement, nipple abrasion, clogged ducts and mastitis. They are also taught about normal suckling patterns, the course and treatment of obstructed ducts and how to approach the diagnosis and treatment of slow weight gain and reluctant nursers without immediately recommending weaning or supplementation.

Trainees in the Lactation Speciality Training Course receive 24 hours of supervised clinical experience in these 4 programme areas. In addition, 60 hours of classroom instruction and 16 hours of field observations are provided.

The goal of the 4-week training course is to strengthen breastfeeding promotion in developing countries by improving the knowledge of health care providers about the clinical management of lactation and breastfeeding. If breastfeeding is to be seriously promoted and protected throughout the world, then skilled service provided by knowledgeable health professionals are essential. To assure the availability of such professionals, clinical learning opportunities about breastfeeding and lactation must become a standard unit of medical and nursing education and of postgraduate training in the perinatal specialties. Lactation programmes based at teaching hospitals offer an ideal means of providing these learning opportunities. The specific objectives of the course include:

- Training teams of physicians and nurses from teaching hospitals as lactation specialists.
- Assisting physician-nurse teams to develop a breastfeeding/lactation management programme appropriate to their own country setting.

- Helping trainees design continuing education activities for their physicians and nursing colleagues.
- Assisting trainees to select and develop appropriate teaching materials for their country programmes.

Classroom sessions are carried out in seminar style. Topics include: immunology and biochemistry of breastmilk, psychological and developmental aspects of breastfeeding, anatomy, physiology and kinesiology of lactation and breastfeeding, procedures for routine breastfeeding management, special breastfeeding situations (e.g. cesarean deliveries, multiple births, jaundice, handicapped infants), common problems, medical problems during breastfeeding, evaluation of progress, failure to thrive and insufficient milk syndrome, infant nutrition and weaning, maternal nutrition, working mothers, milk banking, adjustment and psychosocial issues, hospital policies and procedures, clinic management, induced lactation and re-lactation, drugs and contaminants lactation, fertility and family planning strategies, for promotion, programme evaluation, and formula marketing and WHO Code.

Field observations include: joining public health nurses for an afternoon of home visits to families with young breastfeeding infants; visiting a hospital in Tijuana, Mexico, to observe a relactation programme for mothers and infants recovering from diarrhoea and malnutrition; attending a hospital teaching clinic that serves breastfeeding babies; and visiting the San Diego Zoo for a discussion of comparative lactation.

Programme participants also develop a plan for a

breastfeeding management teaching programme to implement in their own hospitals. These plans are presented to the faculty and their classmates for discussions and suggestions.

Between August 1983 and February 1985, participants from 10 countries took part in 4 training sessions. The participants represented 14 teaching hospitals and 2 research institutes and included 20 physicians, 12 nurses and 3 nutritionists. Follow-up visits made by lactation clinic staff to 3 countries revealed that lactation programmes were being developed. In all 3 countries the programmes encompassed both teaching activities and changes in hospital practices. Early breastfeeding without prelacteal feeds, rooming-in and elimination of supplements of water or formula were becoming standard hospital practice. Medical residents, students and staff were participating in breastfeeding rounds and lactation clinics. Courses and conferences on breastfeeding were being provided to other institutions and professional groups in the surrounding communities. In addition, lactation clinics were established by 5 teams and more than 12 breastfeeding research and evaluation projects were undertaken by graduates. Such country programmes, with their focus on health professional education are an essential prerequisite for an effective breastfeeding promotion campaign.

In 1985, the San Diego Lactation Programme established an independent non-profit organization called *Wellstart* for these educational activities.

(Courtesy : *Mothers and Children*)

NOMINATION SHEET

Assam State Branch, TNAI

Office	Present Office Holder	Name and Address of the Nominee with TNAI No
Secretary	Mrs Aruna Baruah Sister Tutor, School of Nursing, Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh-786002 (Assam) (Interim Secretary)	
Chairman, Nursing Service and Social Welfare	Vacant	
Chairman, Public Health Nursing Section	Vacant	

Note :

Closing Date for Nomination : 16th August, 1986.

Return the completed Nomination Sheet to the Returning Officer, Ms Mukta Guria, Asstt. Nursing Superintendent, Satribari Christian Hospital, Guwahati.

Election will take place at the time of the State Conference.
Consent of the Nominee should be obtained.

Nominator's TNAI No.....

Name:

Address.....