

A Survey of Awareness of Breastfeeding Benefits in Primary Care Setting

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Introduction & Background

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend that an infant be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life and continue to be breastfed until one year of age.
- Breastfeeding benefits for the infant include improved function of the gastrointestinal tract, decreased risk of acute infection, as well psychological benefits.
- The United States Department of Health and Human Services set a Healthy People 2020 goal to have 81.9% of infants breastfed at least once.



Introduction and Background

- Breastfeeding rates remain low among African-American women and low-income women.
- United Neighborhood Health Services (UNHS) is a Community Health Center located in Nashville, TN that serves 24,000 primarily underserved and uninsured patients. 10,000 of these patients identify as African-American.
- There are many complex reasons that a woman may choose not to breastfeed. This study aims to determine if there is a knowledge deficit among clients at UNHS in regard to breastfeeding benefits and recommendations, as well as evaluate current breastfeeding rates.

Methodology

- A 17 question survey was developed for women of childbearing age. Questions consisted of demographic info, past breastfeeding experience, future breastfeeding plans, interest in learning more about breastfeeding, and 7 true/false questions about breastfeeding benefits and recommendations.
- 140 surveys were distributed to 3 clinic sites. 14 were self completed during a medical appointment intake process. 26 were completed orally at a health fair.

Results

- The average number of correct responses for the 7 questions was 3/7.
- Of the women with children (n=28), 75% had not breastfed in the past.
- 72.5% did not intend to breastfeed in the future.
- There was not a statistically significant difference in average number of correct responses between women who intended to breastfeed in the future and women who did not intend to breastfeed in the future.
- 80% of the women surveyed did not want more information about breastfeeding.

Results (con't)

Question	Percent of clients who answered correctly
For the first 6 months of life, breast milk is the only food a baby needs.	47.5%
Breastfed babies are less likely to get infections such as diarrhea, lung infections, ear infections, and urinary tract infections.	42.5%
It is recommended that babies be only breastfed for the first 6 months of life.	30%
It is recommended that babies continue to be breastfed until at least one year of age.	30%
If a mom is not eating a healthy diet, breast milk is still healthy for the baby.	52.5%
If a mom is smoking cigarettes, she can still breastfeed.	40%

Discussion

- 25% of the women with children had breastfed. The remaining 75% have never breastfed. This is far below the Healthy People 2020 goal of 81.9% initiating breastfeeding.
- Only 30% of the women were aware of the current recommendations by the AAP and WHO to breastfeed exclusively for the first 6 months of life and continue to breastfeed until at least one year of age. This is an area where intervention could be targeted.
- This is a small sample (n=40). Increasing the sample size and the diversity of the sample could gather more statistically significant results.

Recommendations

- Promote breastfeeding benefits and recommendation in the clinic through prenatal education, posters, brochures, etc.
- Further inquire as to why women are not choosing to breastfeed through a focus group.
- Educate the staff on breastfeeding benefits and recommendations to increase buy-in from staff.
- Partner with delivering MDs/CNMs to provide support for breastfeeding mothers with education, lactation specialists, etc.

Conclusion

- Breastfeeding is beneficial for infant and maternal health
- Many of the women surveyed at UNHS were not aware of breastfeeding benefits or recommendations.
- Interventions to increase breastfeeding rates could start with education about the breastfeeding benefits and recommendations.



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