Effect of a Novel Breastfeeding Education Program on Exclusive Breastfeeding

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Objectives: The benefits of breastfeeding are well recognized for maternal and infant health. However, exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) rates are well below the Healthy People 2020 Guidelines. While over 84% of mother/infant dyads initiate breastfeeding, by 2 weeks postpartum only 33% of them are exclusive breastfeeding. Suboptimal breastfeeding in the US is associated with increased maternal and infant morbidity and mortality. Although breastfeeding support has increased the initiation of breastfeeding, the role of perinatal interventions is contradictory. The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of a novel perinatal educational intervention in East Texas.

Methods: Institutional Review Board approval was received for the study. In-person BF education was provided to the participants in the third trimester of pregnancy. Deidentified data were analyzed from a Midwifery practice in East Texas. For this study exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) is defined as feeding only directly from the breast and breastfeeding (HMF) is defined as receiving exclusively human milk either from the breast or the bottle. Descriptive statistics and cross-tab analysis were performed to evaluate differences between those that received the education and those that did not.

Results: Most participants intended to breastfeed (95.6%) before delivery. Of the total number of participants, 72.1% of those that received both education modules were EBF at discharge while only 63.5% of mothers without BF education were EBF. Of those receiving education about hand expressing colostrum before delivery, 9% did colostrum before delivery.

Conclusions: Differences were seen in breastfeeding behaviors between those who received the education and those that did not. The postnatal use of colostrum expressed prenatally increased the exclusivity of breastfeeding. While the educational intervention was deemed successful in increasing breastfeeding exclusivity, there was a significant drop from those intending to exclusively breastfeed and the actual outcome of exclusively breastfeeding.

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