A Community Partnership

TO SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING MOTHERS OF LATE PRETERM INFANTS

Breastfeeding clearly promotes the present and future health of women and their infants; however, late preterm infants (those born between 34 and 36 completed weeks gestation) present particular challenges to their mothers who want to successfully establish breastfeeding. For example, although these infants may appear to be adapting well to life outside the womb, their immature suck, sleepiness, and low breast milk intake places them at increased risk for hospital readmission for jaundice, rapid weight loss, and slow weight gain. Their mothers may struggle with establishing an adequate milk supply. These vulnerable mother–newborn dyads often are discharged home with a complex feeding plan that can include feeding at the breast, using a nipple shield, using a home infant scale before and after breastfeeding to measure intake, breast pumping, and supplementing with expressed milk. This routine commonly needs to continue until the infant transitions to full breastfeeding, which often occurs at approximately 42 weeks postconception age (Lucas, Gupton, Holditch-Davis, & Brandon, 2014; Meier, Furman, & Degenhardt, 2007; Meier, Patel, Wright, & Engstrom, 2013).

Abstract: Mothers of late preterm infants need timely breastfeeding support after hospital discharge. Breastfeeding peer counselors with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) can provide this support, but communication with hospitals is needed to facilitate early contact with women. We aimed to develop and implement a sustainable organizational process that would expedite support by providing WIC peer counselors access to mothers of late preterm infants before hospital discharge. Key strategies included creating a workable process; addressing barriers and stakeholder concerns; planning a pilot program to test the process; and inviting the WIC breastfeeding peer counselors to tour the hospital, meet nursing staff, and practice scripting their initial encounter with mothers. The organizational pathway currently is being implemented throughout the health system. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.nwh.2017.06.004

Keywords: breastfeeding | breastfeeding peer counselors | community partnership | late preterm infants | WIC
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