

Strategy 2. Professional Education

Definition

Professional education includes any program that improves the knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors of health care providers in relation to the importance of breastfeeding, the physiology and management of lactation, or the need for breastfeeding counseling for mothers. Health care providers are defined here as doctors, nurses, midwives, nurse practitioners, nutritionists, lactation consultants, and other health care professionals working in maternity care.

Rationale

Health care professionals working in maternity care (obstetrics, midwifery, pediatrics, family practice) need in-depth knowledge and skills directly related to breastfeeding and lactation management because 86% of Americans still turn to a health professional, such as a doctor, as their primary source of health information.²⁶ Other health care providers who interact with women of reproductive age or infants need to recognize that breastfeeding is a normal and biologically important physiologic process that is critical to infant and maternal health, and they need a basic understanding of breastfeeding.

Health care providers can influence a woman's decision to breastfeed and her ability and desire to continue breastfeeding.²⁷ However, some clinicians lack the skills to help women when they have problems with breastfeeding. Some also believe that breastfeeding provides only modest benefits and that formula-fed babies are just as healthy as breastfed babies.²⁸ Education to improve health care providers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in this area is a key step to increasing professional support for breastfeeding.

significant increase in initiation (from 59% to 65%). The training was taught by public health professionals, perinatal clinicians, and peer counselors in three 4-hour sessions. It covered a broad range of breastfeeding topics, from managing hyperbilirubinemia (which causes jaundice) to providing culturally competent care.²⁹

To address the lack of breastfeeding knowledge among doctors, the AAP worked with several partners to develop its Breastfeeding Residency Curriculum for medical residents in pediatrics, family medicine, and obstetrics and gynecology. An evaluation of the curriculum found that residents at six intervention sites improved significantly in knowledge, practice patterns, and confidence compared with residents at seven control sites.³⁰

The study's results also showed a significant increase in exclusive breastfeeding rates for 6-month-old infants at intervention sites (from 2.3% to 9.0%). At control sites, 6-month-old infants were half as likely to be exclusively breastfeeding after the intervention.³⁰

Evidence of Effectiveness

The results of a recent study on the effects of practitioner education on breastfeeding initiation and exclusivity at four Massachusetts hospitals with low breastfeeding rates found a statistically

Key Considerations

- Breastfeeding education programs can be provided in person or online and can range from 1-hour lectures to intensive courses that last several weeks. Building skills to help health care providers deal with even routine lactation problems takes a combination of extensive formal instruction and practical experience. Short lectures should only be used to raise general awareness and increase acceptance of breastfeeding and lactation management.
- Health care providers need to be aware of how the procedures they perform or the medications they prescribe can directly or indirectly affect women who breastfeed now or who may do so in the future.
- Nurses often provide the most regular care for breastfeeding mothers and infants. Professional education provided through school curricula, in-service training, and continuing education can help ensure that nurses learn about breastfeeding approaches and techniques.



Action Steps

1. Make available and coordinate grand rounds or in-service presentations on breastfeeding by health care professionals with training in this area.
2. Distribute clinical protocols developed by experts, such as the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, to local doctors.
3. Expand the reach of professional development by providing training.
4. Identify and promote access to evidence-based online and CD-based training courses for the health care workforce.



Program Examples

Breastfeeding Promotion in Physicians' Office Practices (BPPOP III)

The AAP's BPPOP III program works to increase doctors' confidence and skills in breastfeeding care. As part of this program, a curriculum was developed to teach residents in pediatrics, family medicine, and obstetrics and gynecology how to promote and manage breastfeeding in

World Health Organization Course for BFHI Hospitals

To be designated as Baby-Friendly under the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), a facility must train its staff on the topics covered in the WHO course entitled *Section 3: Breastfeeding Promotion and Support in a Baby-friendly Hospital*. The following topics are covered in this course:

- Session 1: BFHI: a part of the Global Strategy
- Session 2: Communication skills
- Session 3: Promoting breastfeeding during pregnancy
- Session 4: Protecting breastfeeding
- Session 5: Birth practices and breastfeeding
- Session 6: How milk gets from breast to baby
- Session 7: Helping with a breastfeed
- Session 8: Practices that assist breastfeeding
- Session 9: Milk supply
- Session 10: Infants with special needs
- Session 11: If baby cannot feed at the breast
- Session 12: Breast and nipple conditions
- Session 13: Maternal health concerns

racially and ethnically diverse populations. The curriculum has seven major sections: advocacy, community outreach and coordination of care, anatomy and physiology, basic skills, peripartum support, ambulatory management, and cultural competency. Technical assistance is provided by the AAP and other experts.

Educating Physicians In their Communities (EPIC)

The first EPIC training was launched in 2000 in Georgia to give free educational programs on immunization to doctors in private practice. In 2007, the Georgia Chapter of the AAP launched the EPIC Breastfeeding Program. The curriculum for this program is intended to educate health care providers about the most current breastfeeding information available so they can provide optimal care and guidance to breastfeeding mothers.

A Case Study in Breastfeeding and Human Lactation

This University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing course is for junior and senior nursing students. The course gives students who plan to work with women and infants a way to focus their knowledge in the area of breastfeeding. The course combines classroom and clinical experiences that focus on current research and issues related to breastfeeding.

Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) Training Program

The CLC Training Program is a 40-hour course taught at several locations across the United States. It is designed to provide up-to-date, research-based information on lactation, the art of counseling, and comprehensive breastfeeding management. The CLC Training Program also offers continuing education credits for registered nurses, registered dietitians, International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs), and nurse-midwives.



Resources

Breastfeeding Promotion in Physicians' Office Practices (BPPOP III)

American Academy of Pediatrics

Provides information about the BPPOP III professional training program and the locations in the pilot study.

http://www2.aap.org/breastfeeding/curriculum/curriculum_developers.html

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM)

The ABM clinical protocols inform providers about the care of breastfeeding mothers and infants.

<http://www.bfmed.org/Resources/Protocols.aspx>

Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) Training Program

Provides information about the CLC Training Program.

<http://www.healthychildren.cc/CLC.HTM>

Educating Physicians In their Communities (EPIC)

Find out more about EPIC trainings for doctors in Georgia.

<http://www.gaepic.org>

International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA)

A listing of courses offered by the ILCA.

<http://www.ilca.org>

Wellstart International

Information and resources to improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of health care providers related to optimal infant and maternal health and nutrition.

<http://www.wellstart.org>

Core Competencies in Breastfeeding Care and Services for All Health Professionals

United States Breastfeeding Committee

This document provides health care professionals with guidelines and a framework for integrating evidence-based breastfeeding knowledge, skills, and attitudes into standard health care delivery.

<http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/HealthCare/TrainingforHealthCareProfessionals/CoreCompetencies/tabid/225/Default.aspx>

