

Experiences and Perceptions of Women Who Used a Nursing Mothers' Room in a University Setting

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Background

- Breastfeeding women returning to work after a short maternity leave are particularly vulnerable to early weaning.
- The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 as well as laws in numerous states require employers to provide breaks and a private place where women can pump their breasts that is not a bathroom.
- Unfortunately, these laws have not been widely implemented, they do not apply to all work and school settings, and there are no sanctions for failure to create nursing mothers' rooms (NMRs).
- Gathering and analyzing data and disseminating results about the breastfeeding experiences of women who use NMRs may provide an alternative to legal action if employers become more informed about the value of NMRs in work settings.

Study Aims

- Describe experiences of women who started using a NMR at the University of Minnesota (UMN), Twin Cities in 2008, 2009 and 2010.
- Determine their perceptions of how their NMR use affected their breastfeeding duration and their infants' daily proportion of mother's milk of all milk intake at 3, 5-6, and 9 months.

Design and Method

- Design:** Descriptive and cross-sectional
- Procedures:** UM Survey (web-based) was used to administer the investigator-designed survey. Potential participants were sent an invitation to respond to the survey via e-mail in November 2011.
- Ethical considerations:** The study was approved by the university IRB. On the survey web site information about the study and an informed consent document preceded the survey questions. Responses were anonymous to the investigators.

Population and Sample

- Target Population:** Students, staff, and faculty at the UMN who used the NMR in the School of Nursing (SoN)
- Accessible Population:** Women oriented to the NMR in 2008, 2009, and 2010
 - N=91; 7 UMN e-mail addresses were no longer valid
 - Accessible population reduced to 84
- Sample:** Women invited who completed the survey (N=43); predominately graduate students and staff from 6 schools and colleges in Academic Health Center

Participant Comment:

"I am currently using the NMR in WDH again for my second child."

Sample Characteristics

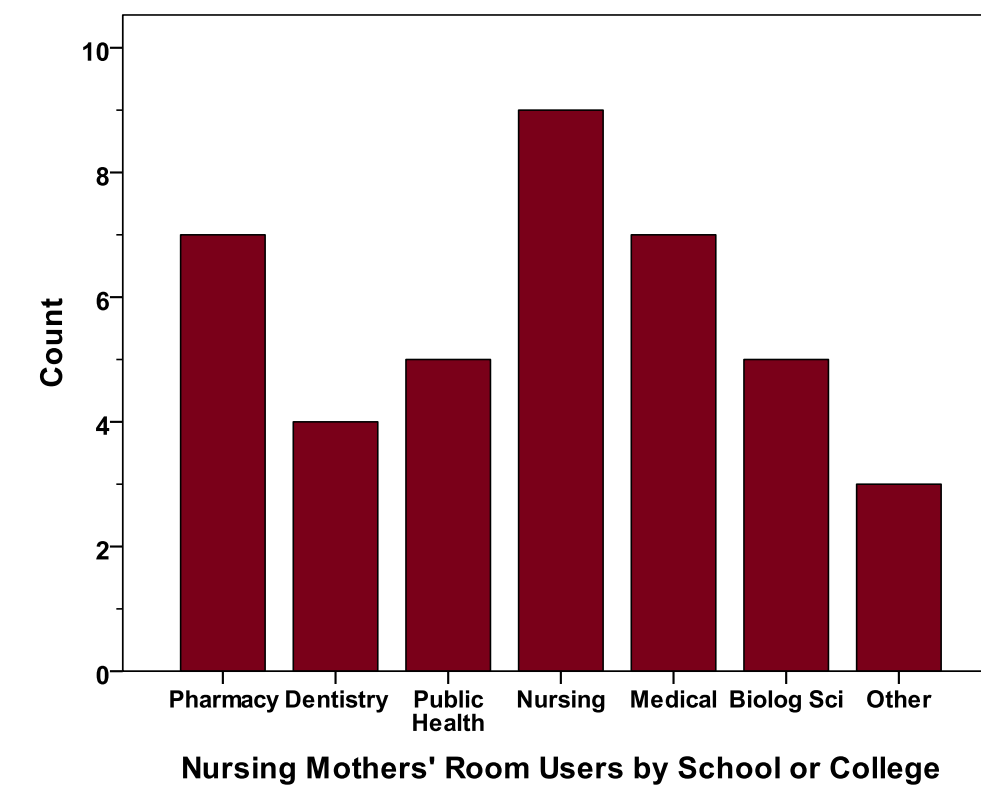


Figure 1. Mothers' School or College of School Attendance or Employment; N = 43; 3 women had missing data.

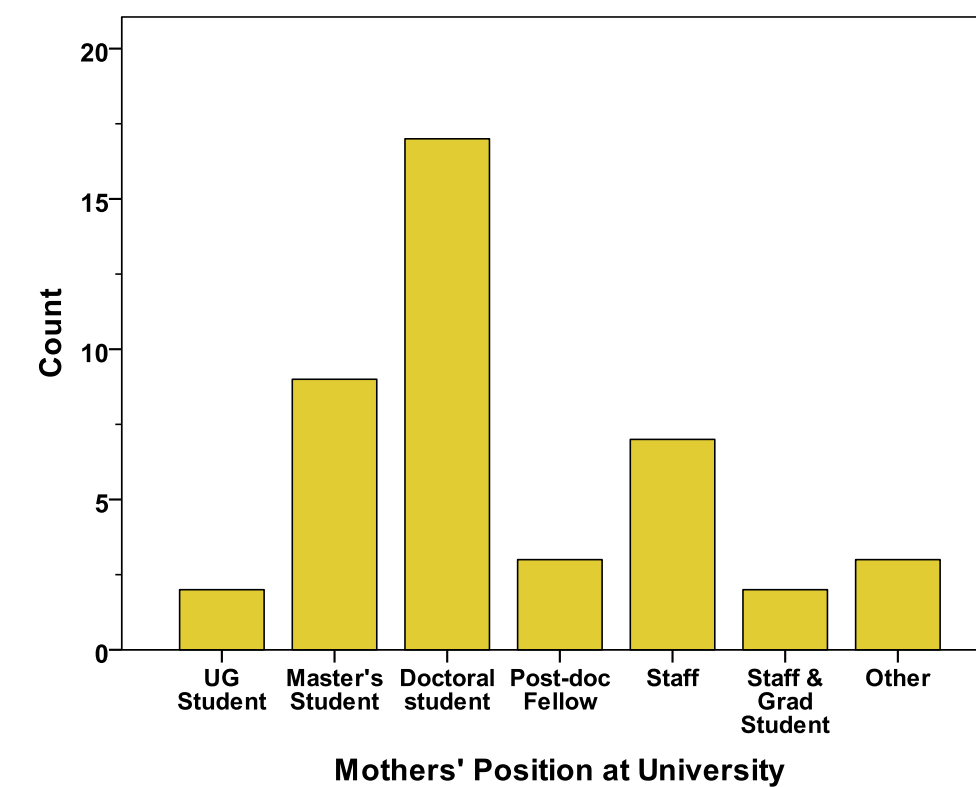


Figure 2. Mothers' Role at University; N = 43; no women had missing data

Results

Specific Aim 1

- Women began using the NMR when their infants were 2 to 68 weeks (M = 12.93; SD = 13.32).
- They stopped using it when their infants were 8 to 82 weeks (M = 44.90; SD = 18.50).
- Infants were completely weaned when they were 19 to 140 weeks (M = 56.30; SD = 28.02).
- Five infants were still breastfeeding when their mother completed the survey.

Participant comment:

"Thank you for the room! My daughter is a beautiful, healthy 3 year old who nursed until she was 2 1/2. I started nursing school when she was 6 weeks old and would never have been able to do it so easily if it wasn't for the convenience of that room. It was hard and sometimes felt isolating to spend every lunch break away from my classmates, but I met some wonderful moms in the NMR and it was well worth it."

Results (cont.)

Specific Aim 2

Table 1. Maternal Perceptions of Impact of NMR Use on Breastfeeding Duration

Scale	"no, not at all"	"no, not much"	"not sure"	"yes, somewhat"	"yes, a whole lot"
Extent to which NMR use increased duration of breastfeeding (n=42)					
n	2	5	3	10	22
%	4.8	11.9	7.1	23.8	52.4
Extent to which NMR use increased duration of exclusive breastfeeding (n=41)					
n	5	1	2	11	22
%	12.2	2.4	4.9	26.8	53.7

Table 2. Percentages of Infant Intake That Was Mother's Milk at 3, 5-6, and 9 Months

Age of Infant	Infant Intake That Was Mother's Milk: Expressed or from the Breast					
	1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-99%	100%
3 months (n = 42)						
n	0	1	1	2	4	34
%	0	2.4	2.4	4.8	9.5	81.0
5-6 months (n = 43)						
n	1	2	3	4	8	25
%	2.3	4.7	7.0	9.3	18.6	58.1
9 months* (n = 34)						
n	2	2	2	7	11	10
%	5.9	5.9	5.9	20.6	32.4	29.4

*Nine women had completely weaned their child from liquid intake that was breast milk.

Participant comments:

"The NMR enabled me to nurse my child to age 1y with no problems at all. Without this option I probably would have quit nursing at 4 months... More workplaces need these options to assist new moms and make breastfeeding easier for everyone."

"Having access to the NMR made it easier for me to continue to give my child breast milk. I would have stopped 6 months earlier because classes and workload would have made it difficult to make the time if the NMR had not been in close proximity to my classes."

"I don't think I would have been able to exclusively breastfeed for an entire year without the availability of this room!"

Discussion

Limitations

- Just over a 50% response rate
 - Some women with valid e-mail addresses were no longer at the university and may not have checked that e-mail address while the survey was open.
 - Survey took time; and there was no compensation.
- Possible response bias
 - Those who used the room longer may have perceived a higher impact and been more likely to respond.
 - Those mothers who weaned earlier than the group as a whole may have been less likely to reply.
- Well-educated participants from a research-based university so results are not generalizable to the general population

Conclusions and Implications

- Based on maternal perceptions NMRs make a difference in breastfeeding behavior.
- The majority of the women (76%) perceived a positive impact on breastfeeding duration from NMR use.
- The proportion of women exclusively breastfeeding between 5 and 6 months was more than half (58%).
- In contrast, the U.S. national average was 14.8% in 2011; for MN it was 15% (CDC, 2011).
- Most of the women who participated in this survey were very successful in combining breastfeeding with school or work.
- Most will be working in health care in the future where they may influence other women to have similarly successful experiences.

Implications

Research

- Continue using the survey to evaluate use of the NMR in the SoN and make it available for evaluating other NMRs on UMN campuses as requested by other UMN advocates.
- Adapt survey used in this study for use in other settings and with different populations.
- Attempt to achieve higher response rates in the future by conducting annual surveys targeting women who have finished using the NMR during the previous year.

Practice

- Advocate for opening more NMRs on campus and across the state, nation and worldwide.
- The SoN NMR, the first on campus, was opened in 1994; there are now 11 NMRs on campus and more are needed.
- A lactation advocacy steering committee on the UMN campus was formed 2 years ago and meets regularly.

Acknowledgements

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