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
1. Describe experiences of women who started using a NMR at the University of Minnesota (UMM), Twin Cities in 2008, 2009 and 2010.
2. 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.
• Inclusion Criteria: 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 UMM 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• N=91; 7 UMM e-mail addresses were no longer valid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

Sample Characteristics

Results (cont.)

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Extent to which NMR use increased duration of breastfeeding (n=42)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“no, not at all”</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“not much”</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“not sure”</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Percentages of Infant Intake That Was Mother’s Milk: Expressed or from the Breast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Infant</th>
<th>1-20%</th>
<th>21-40%</th>
<th>41-60%</th>
<th>61-80%</th>
<th>81-99%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 months (n=42)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 months (n=43)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months (n=34)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.”
• “It was 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.”

Discussion

Conclusions and Implications
• Based on maternal perceptions NMRs may 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 14.6% 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.

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.

Acknowledgements
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