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Is it time to apply Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative approaches in the primary care setting?

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Introduction:

Many professional organizations have published recommendations prompting primary care providers (PCPs) to improve the breastfeeding friendliness of their practices, however a standardized breastfeeding support initiative does not exist. This project aims to propose a conceptual framework for strengthening breastfeeding support in the primary care setting in the context of the Social Ecological Model, informed by key stakeholder input.

Methods:

Two surveys were conducted within the professional lactation community. The first survey consisted of 10 open-ended questions focused on breastfeeding support in the primary care setting and was administered to a private Lactation Consultant Forum on Facebook. The second survey consisted of 22 multiple choice questions, which was administered to lactation professionals, members of the East Tennessee Lactation Consultant Association and the previously mentioned forum. The second survey was intended to assess feasibility and impactfulness of ten potential strategies identified in the first survey. The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results:

The first survey received 9 responses. The second survey received 53 responses; 42% lactation consultants, 15% PCPs, 26% non-provider medical staff. More than 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 7 of the 10 strategies would positively impact breastfeeding rates. Further, all respondents agree that breastfeeding policies supporting clinic staff and lactation training for PCPs would improve breastfeeding rates.

Discussion:

Evidence from these surveys as well as from the literature suggests that a breastfeeding program, similar to the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, within the primary care setting is warranted and could have profound impact on breastfeeding rates.