

Submission no. 44

AUTHORISED:



From: Bronwyn Kelleher
Sent: Wednesday, 14 February 2007 10:15 AM
To: Committee (ABA (PC))
Subject: Dept. Health - support for breastfeeding

Attachment: 14Feb07.doc

The Secretary of the relevant committee (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing), House of Representatives,

My name is Bronwyn Kelleher, I have one daughter who is 6 months old who was conceived after 9 IVF attempts. I am a registered nurse and a registered psychiatric nurse but am writing this as a mum.

When I was in hospital struggling to establish a milk supply in a baby friendly hospital I was pressured into feeding my baby formula as a result of lack of education of the midwife, who basically suggested if I didn't I would be abusing my child. I still believe given a couple more hours she would have fed a lot better and I would have had fewer problems. Every time I went to feed staff were critical of me instead of encouraging my efforts. Not passing on info from the lactation consultant, not referring me to the lactation consultant when I asked as I was having problems.

When I was discharged from hospital the maternal and child health nurse would not accept that my baby was from birth on the 10th percentile and as a result did not need formula feeds. I was told to comp after every feed despite the fact I was keen to breastfeed fully. Eventually I decided I would just lie and say I was comp feeding. Without the support of the Australian breastfeeding association who were able to show me the 2006 charts and support my efforts I would not have been able to. The problem has been solved now as I changed health nurses.

I have never been harassed in public but I saw a different GP when Miriam was 4 months old and he suggested that as I was a bit stressed about breastfeeding with a viral illness I should just give it up. I was also informed by a fill in nurse that when I give it up at 12 months...I then interrupted her and told her I would be feeding my baby longer if she wanted it.

I believe the situation would have been better if the hospital staff made better links with the lactation consultant. I believe the staff in the hospital need to be aware of the fact that most babies do not require formula routinely and educating staff in different ideas like switching sides frequently, expressing, teaching relaxation, and generally being more positive about breastfeeding. ABA have made many suggestions which would have prevented my baby from having the formula, which lead me to become depressed and unable to enjoy my baby. I believe health professionals should be promoting the WHO charts, the WHO recommendations for example feed until 2 years and beyond if mother and baby feel this is working.

General knowledge of breastfeeding benefits is very poor. People believe that formula is the same quality as breastfeeding and as a result do not see why persistence is worth it.

I believe more research needs to be done into PCOS and other reasons for both low and over supply, medications

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which could help, lifestyle changes which can help. I was personally helped by METFORMIN which is on a private script as not approved for the purpose of lactating.

In returning to work I found it difficult to find a quiet and private space to express, and the time to do this. Education for employers would help. As well as a designated fridge as a few people were turned off by my keeping a human product in a fridge which had their lunch in. Lactation breaks and space would be ideal.

I think it would be a good idea to have a lot more public education of the needs of a breastfeeding mother and the promotion of feeding babies and young children would be helpful.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or further information.

Bronwyn Kelleher.