

Submission no. 215

AUTHORISED: 4/4/07 

Dear Sirs,

I wish to support all the previous submissions already posted and add my own views.

Response to terms of reference:

a) health benefits for baby include; reduced risks of childhood obesity and diabetes, childhood cancers, resistance to numerous respiratory and gastrointestinal tract illnesses, resistance to infectious childhood illness, ie chicken pox, and ear infections, constantly changing nutritional composition of milk to be appropriate food at every feed to meet the constantly changing needs of the developing infant and toddler to promote optimal healthy growth and development, increased IQ compared to formula fed infants, gentle on the stomach and easily digested, thought to reduce risks of bowel / gut problems in adult life, improved visual acuity, lower risks of allergy and asthma, lower risks of urinary tract infection, sucking action assists development of mouth and jaw muscles to promote early speech, sterile and hygienic product which may be used to assist and clean blocked tear ducts and umbilicus. Promotes strong emotional ties.

health benefits for Mother include; reduced risks of breast and ovarian cancer, osteoporosis, assists uterus to contract quickly back to pre-pregnant state, delays return of menstruation, may have a contraceptive effect when breastfeeding exclusively, and very importantly assists in the development of strong, uniting bonds of love.

b) Enforce or update the Maif agreement, adhere to the WHO guidelines re the International code of marketing of breastmilk substitutes, cease formula company funded educational offers with free gifts to health professionals and chemists, cease free satchet samples to chemist nurses and pharmacists, remove all advertising of paraphernalia associated with formula, ie bottles and teats, make formula less visible in shops or available after consult with health professional, investigate advertising in breach of Maif agreement on internet. have documented on side of formula tin that use of the product increases the risks of.....as is on cigarette packaging. The impact to the disadvantaged and indigenous communities is one more strike against the opportunity to achieve maximum health, also consider the financial implications of the implementation of artificially feeding infants that is increasing the degree of poverty experienced by an already disadvantaged group. Formula tins should have clearly stated that breastfeeding is the optimal method to feed an infant followed by the mothers expressed breast milk, of that is not possible the next best option is breast milk from another infection free woman and the fourth and last option is formula. This needs to be well advertised!

c) short term effects; all of those mentioned above.

long term effect; saving of resources, fuel and energy with less manufacture and disposal of bottles, tins and the formula itself therefore less carbon gases, breastfeeding is environmentally friendly, less employees taking time off work to mind sick infants therefore increased productivity, less hospitalisations as an adult due to reduced poor health outcomes from heart disease, diabetes, gastrointestinal complaints and related illness.

d) initiatives to encourage breastfeeding;

Instituting breast milk banks similar to blood banks for use by hospitals for low birth weight and

premature infants, and lots of education to promote the health benefits and low cost personally and to society of choosing to breastfeed,
 teaching that bonding occurs with loving and touch not by having a turn feeding with a bottle,
 encouraging more men in typically female orientated areas; ie medical areas, antenatally,
 after hours health promotion activities related to infant health to enable partners to gain knowledge and empowerment re best practise for health issues
 making breastfeeding bra's the same price as other bras
 incorporate breastfeeding information into teaching programs for medical, nursing, allied health staff and child care workers as part of their qualifications,
 public recognition and advertising of the supports available for a breastfeeding family
 de-sexualise / remove all advertising that relies on visions of breasts unless equally balanced with visions of babies at the breast,
 discourage television programs portraying babies being feed with a bottle or using dummies/pacifiers

Public apology from all formula companies for deceiving the general public about the benefits of their products and little about the harm for their financial gain,
 all birthing hospitals and health facilities to subscribe to the Baby Friendly health initiative,
 all health professionals undergo Govt funded education to enhance their knowledge of breastfeeding or refer clients to appropriately trained personnel,
 regular mass media campaigns,
 more baby friendly facilities that are clean and modern,
 "baby bonus" extra to breastfeeding women and babies,
 separate shelves of formula and bottles from their positioning beside health facilities and personnel,
 larger writing on formula tins "breast is best",
 commence normalisation of breastfeeding to children within the education system,
 Govt form closer ties and increased funding with Australian Breastfeeding Assn,
 funding to increase availibility of support services for women ante and postnatally.
 Implementation of WHO Growth Standards percentiles charts in all health facillities rather than the outdated charts based on statistics from a select group of mainly formula fed infants. This would demonstrate rate of normal growth of a baby feed the normal way that all mammals feed their young.

e) measures in place to promote breastfeeding?

Seems mainly ABA are providing the advertising posters and advice pamphlets, also Breastfeeding week.

Royal Childrens Hospital & Health Services District, Qld, Primary Care Program operate 2 Early feeding Clinic drop in centres available Mon- Fri from 9-12 as well as funding many staff members to complete evidence based online study modules pertaining to breastfeeding, also a home visiting program offered to all new parents to offer support in their own home that regularly addresses breastfeeding issues or concerns, telephone help from Riverton Early Parenting Centre, ABA, private child health nurses, lactation consultants, the latter two not always being easy to access and potentially out of reach financially for many. Early discharge programs from hospitals and decreasing staffing levels of Govt funded community supports is causing many women to reach for a bottle before assistance can be available.

f) Impact of breastfeeding; the health system would be in a much healthier state if more people were to breastfeed, less hospital admissions for all the many many complications caused by obesity. A breast fed infant learns to recognise the sensations of hunger and fullness and the mother needs no millilitre measure to determine whether the baby is sated, she monitors his behaviour, output, and follows his cues. She learns that her milk is ever changing and is unique, capable of meeting all the babys needs. A formula fed baby takes ever increasing volumes of milk that is never adapting to individual need and millilitres are rapidly consumed, before baby even knows he is full, he is too full, his stomach stretches to accomodate the next big feed. He is encouraged to finish all his bottles. Dummies used to settle baby so they remain in the belief that they need something in their mouth. A trend evolves. All contributes to obesity and all its related problems, the greatest health

risk for the Western world. Breastfeeding is the best way to make the changes required to reduce the future load on our already struggling health system by introducing the proven best food available from as soon after birth as possible, simple, cost -effective and best for babies.

*Thank you for your consideration,
Yours faithfully,
Shirley Hewitt*