

Increasing Breastfeeding Support in the Workplace

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Background

- Benefits of Breastfeeding (BF):**
- Infants are protected from infection and illness, less likely to develop asthma, become obese, or die of SIDS.
 - Mothers have lower risk of breast & ovarian cancer.
 - BF is more cost effective and reduces medical costs throughout the lifetime.
 - Employers have fewer health insurance claims, less employee time off, and higher productivity.

- BF Statistics:**
- 24.9% of 6-month-old infants are exclusively BF nationally, 28.3% in Wisconsin
 - 54% of mothers with infants were employed and 73% of these women worked full time in the U.S. in 2015
 - **Employed women are less likely to start BF and BF for a shorter duration than unemployed women**
 - **Within a healthcare organization in WI, women of childbearing ages make up 80% of the workforce, equating to about 5,769 employees**

Purpose of the Project

- To improve awareness of available BF support resources for staff returning to work after maternity leave, a healthcare organization wide BF support policy was created and published
- To gain a better understanding of knowledge of available BF support in the workplace, perceived BF support, and length of BF, a questionnaire was administered 9 months after policy publication to a group of staff who had returned from maternity leave while working for healthcare organization in WI



Literature Review – Common Themes

- BF in the workplace:**
- Enablers - comprehensive BF policy, interpersonal communication strategies, supportive environment, & flexible scheduling
 - Barriers - inadequate storage space for breastmilk, amount of time for breast pumping breaks, employer & coworker support, & private space to express milk

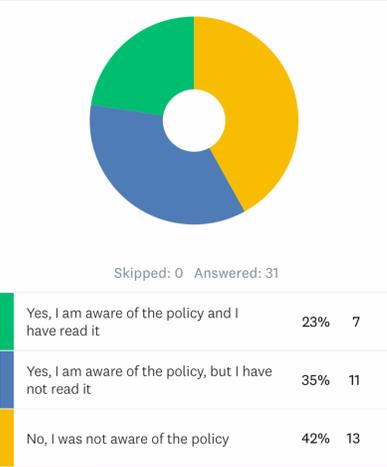
Theoretical Framework

The Iowa Model of Evidence-Based Practice to Promote Quality Care

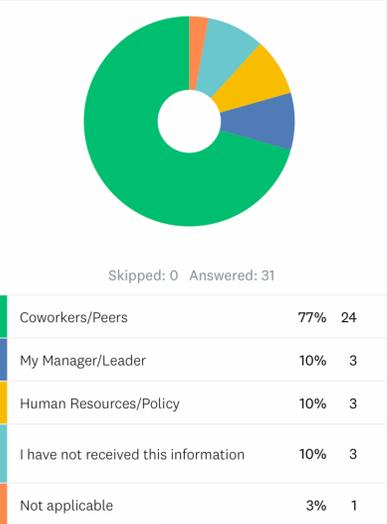
Design: QI project using a retrospective cohort design
Setting: Healthcare Organization in WI, questionnaire invitation sent via email to group of health system staff
Quality, Ethics and Human Subjects Protection: Voluntary participation, standardized questionnaire administered using Survey Monkey, anonymous data with no personal identifiers, multiple choice questions with an area for comments
Study Population: Female staff members who returned from maternity leave and BF in 2019 or 2020 while working for healthcare organization

Results

- **31 participants completed questionnaire**
- 58% work full time
- 52% no longer BF
 - 87.5% of this group successfully BF until 6 months
- 48% currently BF
 - 86% of this group hope to BF until 6 months
- **77% of participants were not aware or had not read new policy**



- **20% of participants received BF in workplace information from a leader or HR.**



- Individual Comments - Themes:**
- Lack of time for breaks to pump breast milk
 - Concern for adequate cleaning of lactation rooms
 - Accessibility of lactation rooms

Conclusion

Due to a predominantly female workforce, employers within the healthcare field have a unique opportunity to make a large impact on BF success for employed women. A breastfeeding support policy was created and published by a healthcare organization in WI. However most questionnaire participants had not read the policy. In addition, most participants received needed BF information informally from coworkers and peers. Other themes that emerged include lack of time for breast pumping breaks, interest for how lactation rooms are cleaned, and accessibility of lactation rooms. This QI project was an important starting point for this healthcare organization's journey towards understanding how to better support breastfeeding women in the workplace.

Recommendations

- Develop HR/Leader processes for BF staff upon return from maternity leave to accomplish:
 - Sharing breastfeeding support policy
 - Creating action plan to best accommodate their needs while BF in workplace – including planning time for BF breaks and locating best BF room for their use
- Provide cleaning products in designated lactation spaces with instructions for use

Acknowledgements

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