Breastfeeding and Baby Friendly

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Becoming Baby Friendly: Creating a Breastfeeding Curriculum for USF SELECT Medical Students

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Background

- Breastfeeding provides the perfect nutrition for infants. Exclusive breast milk reduces the risk of a multitude of health conditions and will ultimately improve the health of our population and lessen the financial burden on our system.1,3
- Having 81.9% of infants breastfed initially, 60.6% at six months of age are goals established by the US Department of Health and Human Services’ “Healthy People 2020”.1
- LVHN is working towards obtaining the Baby Friendly designation by UNICEF and the WHO. This initiative is meant to enable hospitals to improve the care of pregnant women, mothers and newborns in order to promote and support breastfeeding.
- Recent studies have shown that only 25% of women felt their concern(s) about breastfeeding were addressed during the prenatal period.2 Having a formal breastfeeding curriculum for providers can improve knowledge and subsequently rates of exclusive breastfeeding.6
- In the past, there has been no formal education about breastfeeding for medical students at the University of South Florida, making it difficult for students to appropriately counsel and support their patients.

Methods

- This Capstone project was a needs assessment designed to identify whether there is a gap in education surrounding breastfeeding among the USF SELECT medical student population
- A needs assessment survey was administered to first through fourth year USF SELECT medical students
- Responses were analyzed for trends and educational materials were generated based upon the results
- A brief educational presentation was created that covers key points and common questions that a medical student may encounter in various clinical settings. This information will be available electronically.
- In addition, a pocket-guide was generated that covers the basics of breastfeeding and will be included within the “Survival Guide” that is distributed at the beginning of the Women’s Health and Pediatrics Clerkship.
- This project is taking place in conjunction with LVHN’s initiative to become a Baby Friendly hospital and as such, all educational materials were generated based upon approved resources.

Results

- In general, students are only confident answering questions about breastfeeding slightly more than half of the time.
- Most (at least 50%) medical students were able to correctly answer questions regarding proper time frame for breastfeeding initiation, naming benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for mom and baby and assisting a new mom with painful breastfeeding.
- Alternatively, less than half of students were able to advise new mothers on one of the most common feeding issues in the postpartum period, supply. Many of the 55% of incorrect responses included supplementing with formula.
- The most alarming gap identified through this needs assessment was the lack of knowledge surrounding feeding an infant in the NICU. This is a common issue that USF SELECT students will encounter as LVHN has a high acuity and many infants in the NICU. The majority of responses were “I do not know”.
- The answers reviewed had a consistent theme of patient centered responses, whether correct or incorrect. Themes included shared decision making, supporting patient autonomy, motivational interviewing and unbiased support.

Conclusions

- This capstone project identified and lessened a gap in our current medical education surrounding breastfeeding, a topic that has a public health basis and is interdisciplinary with impacts on mothers in obstetrics and newborns/children in pediatrics.
- The educational materials generated will provide future medical students with a more meaningful experience when dealing with breastfeeding patients and allow them to better serve our patient population.
- This information contributes to healthcare as a whole because we are producing well-rounded physicians that will be able to answer basic questions about breastfeeding, in personal and professional settings.
- It would be beneficial to survey medical students upon the completion of their core clinical clerkships in order to identify additional gaps in our pre-clinical education.

REFERENCES