Creating Sustainable Culture Change to Support Human Milk Feeding

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The presenter disclose no relevant financial or commercial conflicts related to this presentation.

Objectives

- Identify healthcare practices that contribute to breastfeeding (human milk feeding) disparities
- Understand the historical trauma of Breastfeeding for Black, Indigenous & People of Color (BIPOC) in the United States
- Discuss solutions to eliminate disparities
Conditions for a Brave Zone

- Face our fears and name them
- Choose curiosity over judgement
- Consider the impact, not just the intent, behind our words
- Lean into discomfort, recognizing it as a space of growth
- Admit when we are being fragile
- Welcome others to point out our fragility when needed
- Acknowledge our collective imperfections to reflect and promote emotional safety
- Assume best intent
- Call people 'in' rather than 'out'
- Seek authenticity
- Embody our truths

The Cost of Slavery 1492 -1865

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhxR6pR-AQ
Enslaved Women as Wet Nurses

I wish I dried up
I wish I dried up
I wish every drop of my milk slipped passed these pink lips and nourished the ground
Where the bones lay
Of my babies
Starved while I fed the murder
I wish I dried up
So the misus babies would dry up too
And be broke
So I could crumble them to dust
Return them to the ground
Where all children of my bosom lay equal

- Hess Love, 2017

“...This movement must begin by acknowledging that the Black baby has a right to be treated as a child.”

- Hirut Melaku, B.A., I.B.C.L.C.
The Fultz Quads

Implicit Bias in Healthcare Professionals: A Systematic Review

Almost all studies found evidence for implicit biases among physicians and nurses. Based on the available evidence, physicians and nurses manifest implicit biases to a similar degree as the general population. The following characteristics are at issue:

- race & ethnicity
- gender
- socio-economic status
- age
- weight
- mental illness
- intravenous drug users
- social circumstances

Gerald & Hurst 2017

Implicit bias (noun):

Bias is the 'implicit' aspect of prejudice...(the) unconscious activation of prejudice notions about race, gender, ethnicity, age and other stereotypes that influences our judgement and decision-making capacity.

Deno 1949
“...due to the systemic racism that is built into this country and its institutions, including the medical system, Black people receive a different level of care by physicians, than people of other races from childhood to adulthood.”

The Black Maternal Mortality Crisis: Causes and Solutions (2020)

The US infant mortality rate rose last year. The CDC says it’s the largest increase in two decades

Black newborns more likely to die when looked after by White doctors

Black newborns more likely to die when looked after by white doctors.
In Her Words…

I took my 4 year old here on Wednesday as his cough symptoms were progressing and he just couldn't get out of bed and just kept coughing. We were told to call him in to have him examined. The doctor came in, I told her all his symptoms from the coughing, to wheezing, to coughing so much that he throws up, diarrhea, and on and off fever of 100.5 to 99.5. She takes her stethoscope listens to the front of his chest and his back, we go in the room about 5 minutes if that. She can see there's nothing really to be an asthmatic cough, she writes paper medically on that and it tells her it's an acute chronic cough. She proceeds to tell me that he has an acute chronic cough, an acute upper respiratory virus and that it will clear up in a couple days. Being who I am, which is a very persistent person I knew that wasn't true. As a mother you know your child and you know when they're not okay. The next day I made an appointment at _______ Immediate Care in ________ to have him seen. I go in there and immediately say test for Covid and strep and they tested for the flu as well. They then did another strep test to be sent off to the lab as the doctor then said he had it in his system that he had it. She however took it too fast and had him on the antibiotics and steroids immediately. How does a hospital not treat my son and send him on his way and the next day I find out his lungs are wet and he has strep, RSV and Moraxella catarrhalis. I'm so glad I kept trusting my gut and getting my son the help that I was desperately seeking and was extremely let down. This whole situation could have had a completely different outcome.

My insurance ended up paying out over $800 in medical fees to _______ and I'm now expected to pay the remaining $200. I don't believe I should be expected to pay as the care my son received was careless and I then had to turn around and seek medical attention elsewhere. It still bothers me weeks later that if I wasn't persistent and kept advocating for my child what could have happened. I could have been standing there crying when we were possibly have received able to contact. From the very start he was already going at seven on his lungs and with the doctors ignoring my concerns, kept reiterating over and over how he had a fever and he kept throwing up. I was already very sick wouldn't eat and he over worked his mother and I over worked him before he went to the hospital and even before I even knew that my baby was sick and I told the doctor he was sick and I told them he had a fever over 100.5 and he was continually throwing up and I don't think the doctor even asked those questions to my child.

Racism

Prejudice and discrimination based on race. Attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or groups on a conscious (explicit) level.

A condition in society in which a dominant racial group benefits from the oppression of others, whether that group wants such benefits or not.

Wikipedia

Sexualization of the Black Body

"Society has sexualized breasts to the point that people are routinely shamed for breastfeeding."

"Compounding this is a historic tradition in which Black bodies have been historically over-sexualized and degraded."

"The perception of Black women as sexually promiscuous by nature is a persistent stereotype that negatively impacts the sexual health and rights of Black women."
Some examples of headlines of anti-breastfeeding articles warning about the dangers of breastfeeding and how formula is a mother’s choice.

Weathering

“Weathering” and Age Patterns of Allotrophic Load Scores Among Blacks and Whites in the United States

Abstract

objectives: We examined whether US Blacks experience early health deterioration, as assessed across biological indicators of acute exposure and adaptation to stress.
“The systemic racism in medical institutions will take decades to fix, but giving Black people greater access to community advocates and care providers can be done now...” Kimberly Jack Allers

Breastfeeding Around the World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Rate (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFRICA</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>86.6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Kenya</td>
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<td>United States</td>
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Lactation Providers in the Hospital

- Most are RN, IBCLC
- Some may be RNs working on obtaining IBCLC
- Over half are over 50 years old
- One third are over 60 years old
- Clinically focused
- Often responsible for large patient load
- May not be available 24/7

Exclusive Breastfeeding Rates

#notonmywatch
Research Article

“Why Even Bother; They Are Not Going to Do It?” The Structural Roots of Racism and Discrimination in Lactation Care

Erin V. Thomas

Abstract
Through semi-structured interviews with 36 International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) who assist mothers with breastfeeding, this study takes a systematic look at breastfeeding disparities. Specifically, this study documents race-based discrimination against patients in the course of lactation care and links the implicit bias literature to breastfeeding disparities. IBCLCs report instances of race-based discrimination against patients such as unequal care provided to patients of color and overt racist remarks said in front of or behind patient’s backs. This study connects patient discrimination in lactation to institutional racism and offers suggestions to address these inequities.
Diversity of Staff

Structure Barriers

- Various pathways to becoming an IBCLC
- Hospital job description required an RN license or a bachelors degree
- All but one were RNs
- Community-based LCs often come from a MCH or CLC background

Action & Impact

- Removed bachelor’s degree requirement from job description
- Recruited from community-based organizations (WIC, ROSE)
- Interviews focused on counseling skills & community-focused approach
What is Possible
1. Maintain focus
2. Take ownership
3. Recognize champions
4. Promote diversity

- [Graph: Met Exclusive Breastfeeding Goal]

We repeat what we don’t repair.
Christine Langley-Obaugh
References


- Fultz Quads: https://racism.org/articles/basic-needs/health-and-health-care/status/92-infant-and-child-health-status/2244-unmothering-black-women-formula