

Editorial

Shifting the Vitamin D Paradigm

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IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY APPREHENSION or hesitation about a journal dedicated to the science of breastfeeding and human lactation, it dissolved when the first issue came off the press. The response of our colleagues has been extremely positive, even overwhelming. The journal looks at home on a desk, in the laboratory, at a library, and even on the coffee table—and that's just the cover. Optimally, its contents will stimulate an avalanche of manuscripts from not only bench scientists, but investigative clinicians, epidemiologists, and promoters of public health as well. Response from our readers to the work reported in the journal is encouraged in the form of a letter to the editor. The opportunity is just an e-mail away. Write to: Breastfeeding_Medicine@urmc.rochester.edu.

The lead article in this issue, by Wagner et al., reports on innovative work on the questions surrounding vitamin D for mother and nursing infant. The paradigm is shifted to give mothers the supplement (6400 IU/day) compared with mothers receiving standard 400 IU/day vitamin D₃. This preliminary study suggests that large doses of vitamin D₃ can be given safely to mothers and that it will significantly increase the vitamin D levels in their milk. This is in contrast to the view long held sacred that increases in maternal dietary intake of vitamin D will not change the levels in milk, which were believed to be dependent solely on sun exposure. This work is important to the entire discussion of vitamin D in the nursing woman and her breastfed infant. Concern has been voiced that pregnant women should receive more vitamin D. The concept has been triggered by data that demonstrate more than

40% of African-American women in their childbearing years are vitamin D deficient and by observations that newborn infants have lower levels than previously thought.¹ This observation also has triggered the recommendation by the Committee on Nutrition of the American Academy of Pediatrics to mandate that breastfed infants receive 400 units of vitamin D instead of 200 units and that it be started at birth and not at 2 months, as previously recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Wagner work suggests that maternal dosing is the answer.

A very provocative article comes from the State Research Institute of Public Health and Health Science Management in Moscow, Russia. Promotion of breastfeeding in Baby-Friendly Maternity Hospitals is compared with breastfeeding in hospitals not so designated. The authors demonstrated a significant increase in duration of breastfeeding in Baby-Friendly Hospitals, in which 31.2% were still breastfeeding at 6 to 12 months, whereas only 19.3% were breastfeeding in this time period in the nondesignated hospitals.

The authors report the same problems noted in Russia as reported in other countries: the pervasiveness of free formula, the introduction of dummies (pacifiers), and the continuing need to educate the perinatal staff.

Breastfeeding as described in the Hindu faith is the second in our series about breastfeeding as addressed in various faiths and cultures. We plan to continue to explore these tenets, which are so central to personal and professional breastfeeding commitments, for the next several issues.

The editors also wish to point out the announcement of the 11th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine in Niagara Falls, New York, USA, in September 2006. The program is outstanding and the waterfalls are spectacular. Make your reservations now. Send your abstracts in by June 30, 2006. The accepted abstracts will be published in the September issue of *Breastfeeding Medicine*.

Finally, the Editorial Board of *Breastfeeding Medicine* notes with great sadness and sense of loss the sudden passing of Dr. Lee Jong-Wook, the Director-General of the World Health Organization. Dr. Lee had worked for WHO for 23 years at country and regional levels and at WHO Headquarters in Geneva as Director-General since July 2002. He was a leader, colleague, and friend of breastfeeding as he continued his mission to help people attain the highest possible level of health through programs at WHO. Dr. Lee was a national of the Republic of Korea. The Academy of Breast-

feeding Medicine is grateful for Dr. Lee's support of breastfeeding that he displayed throughout his public health career.

REFERENCE

1. Nesby-O'Dell S, Scanlon K, Cogswell M, et al. 2002 Hypovitaminosis D prevalence and determinants among African American and white women of reproductive age. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2002;76:187-192.

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