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Lactation Support on Low-Income Women Exclusively Breastfeeding

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Introduction

• The CDC recommends infants be exclusively breastfed until at least six months of age.
• Returning to work is a main barrier to breastfeeding duration among working mothers.
• Providing lactation support in the workplace is critical to promoting breastfeeding practices among working mothers.
• Lack of lactation support in the workplace is a major reason why mothers do not exclusively breastfeed at six months.
• Employed mothers often have inadequate workplace facilities to breastfeed, struggle to find the time to breastfeed during work, and conflicted between obligations as a mother and as an employee.
• Low-socioeconomic-status new mothers, who wish to exclusively breastfeed, face significant challenges associated with available resources, finances, and maternal leave.

PICO Question

Among low-socioeconomic status new mothers that breastfeed (P), does access to lactation support in the workplace (I) compared to no access (C) affect their ability to exclusively breastfeed for the first six months (O)?

Methods

• A systematic search was done through the CINAHL and PubMed databases.
• Key search terms included “breastfeeding”, “low-socioeconomic – status”, and “workplace lactational support”.
• Search criteria required included peer-reviewed articles published between 2017 and present.
• Articles that did not discuss lactation support for low-socioeconomic-status breastfeeding women were excluded.

Findings

Significant findings in factors that affect a woman’s ability to breastfeed for at least 6 months.
• For postpartum mothers, returning to work is negatively associated with breastfeeding duration.
• Women working in the service industry reported receiving lower levels of support for breastfeeding in the workplace and shorter durations of milk expression than other higher-paying occupations.
• When workplace lactation is supported, research has shown a positive influence on employee satisfaction and exclusive breastfeeding through 6 months.
• The development of policies is beneficial in the workplace, however, employer support is a large factor that needs to be improved.
• Despite growing evidence supporting workplace lactational support, many organizations do not provide adequate support for employees who are breastfeeding.

Conclusion

The literature findings revealed multiple examples of workplace interventions that increase the rates of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. The most significant interventions were private lactation rooms and storage areas, adequate break time for pumping, and breastfeeding information. Lactation rooms, storage, and break time:
• 2.3 times more likely to exclusively breastfeed for the first six months

WHAT DOES A LACTATION SPACE ENTAIL?
• dedicated private room
• separate from a bathroom
• has a comfortable chair and a flat surface
• a small refrigerator
• a sink with running water
• cleaning supplies
• electrical outlets

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

• Employers with 50 or more employees must provide breastfeeding mothers with adequate break time and private space (Section 7 of FLSA).
• Requires employers to provide eligible employees with reasonable break time to pump breast milk for one year after the child’s birth.
• Employers are required to provide eligible employees with a private place to pump shielded from view, free from intrusion, and NOT a bathroom.
• The law does not require that this time be compensated

Common Interventions

Information:
• Information on breastfeeding and knowledge of workplace resources increased exclusive breastfeeding 2.7-4.8 times.
• Employers should be educated on the benefits of breastfeeding and what is needed to support breastfeeding in the workplace.

Further research is needed to best support exclusive breastfeeding in low-socioeconomic-status new mothers. The stigma surrounding breastfeeding and pumping in the workplace limits research studies. It is recommended that implementation research is conducted to further evaluate the effectiveness of specific interventions.