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Madeline Wiche

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Implementing Tiny Tusks: Breastfeeding and Infant Support Tent

An honors internship submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Madeline C. Wiche

May 2020

University of Arkansas

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Introduction

Tiny Tusks: Breastfeeding and Infant Support Tent provided the first designated clean, private area to nurse, pump or change an infant's diaper at University of Arkansas home athletic events. Tiny Tusks offered comfortable rocking chairs, changing tables, bottled water, and engaging projects for siblings and young children at a wide variety of University of Arkansas home athletic events, including football games, men's basketball games, and women's gymnastics meets. The project was created and designed by two Eleanor Mann School of Nursing professors, Dr. Allison Scott and Dr. Kelly Vowell-Johnson, in collaboration with the University of Arkansas Athletic Department. Women's Giving Circle was an organization that supported the project with a monetary grant. Along with the guidance of our two mentors, the project was implemented by myself and three other honors students pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing: Brittany Lyons, Lacey Schroeder, and Blair Willheim. We created and distributed educational handouts and pamphlets for anyone utilizing the tent. In collaboration with certified lactation consultants, Eleanor Mann School of Nursing faculty, and senior students pursuing Bachelor of Science in Nursing during their community health clinical, we staffed the Tiny Tusks: Breastfeeding and Infant Support Tent.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants are "exclusively breastfed for about the first 6 months with continued breastfeeding along with introducing appropriate complementary foods for 1 year or longer" (CDC, 2020). Breastfeeding provides many health benefits for both the mother and infant. The longer an infant is breastfed, the greater the protection from illnesses, such as asthma, obesity, Type 1 diabetes, severe lower respiratory disease, acute otitis media, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and gastrointestinal infections

(diarrhea/vomiting) (CDC, 2020). A mother who breastfeeds her infant has a lower risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, Type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure (CDC, 2020). Despite the numerous health benefits, only one in four infants are exclusively breastfed as recommended by the time they are six months old (CDC, 2020). The biggest reason why most mothers stop breastfeeding their infant early is “due to a lack of ongoing support” (CDC, 2020).

In the state of Arkansas, statute number 20-27-2001 (2007) states that it is legal for “a woman may breastfeed a child in a public place or any place where other individuals are present” and statute number 5-14-112 (2007) specifies that a woman breastfeeding a child in a public place “is not committing indecent exposure”; however, the support for various breastfeeding space options if a mother does not want to breastfeed in a public atmosphere is nonexistent from the state statutes (Johnson, Bradford, & Garcia, 2020). The only public option that provides privacy for a breastfeeding mother is oftentimes a restroom, but those can be uncomfortable and dirty. Furthermore, even though the “United States has made strides toward improving breastfeeding rates through state and federal legislation”, many women are shamed or scholded while breastfeeding in public spaces (Thomson, Ebisch-Burton, & Flacking, 2015). Publicly shaming a breastfeeding woman is an unacceptable behavior and such a criticism can deter the mother from continuing the breastfeed. It is important for society to provide both a supportive attitude and proper logistical options for breastfeeding mothers/caregivers so that they can continue providing their infants the vital nutrients via breastfeeding. The mission of the Tiny Tusks: Breastfeeding and Infant Support Tent was to support the promotion of breastfeeding by adequately providing a clean, private space for mothers/caregivers to nurse, pump or change their infant’s diaper at University of Arkansas home athletic events.

Implementation

To begin, the first portion of implementing the Tiny Tusks project was building the space at the University of Arkansas's Donald W. Reynolds Razorback Stadium with the mentors and the three other honors students pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. With the actual white tent already set up, we assembled the two comfortable rocking chairs, two small side tables, one changing station, one diaper pail, and one large portable room divider. Auburn University has a similar tent at their home athletic events and we used their layout as a guide when designing the layout of our tent. We placed the large portable room divider in the center to split the tent into two sections, to be used as the private areas to nurse or pump. One rocking chair and one side table was placed into one corner of each of these areas to maximize the space available. We hung a lightweight, red curtain at the front of each area to better provide privacy. The changing station was positioned outside of the curtained areas so that three people could utilize the tent at one time (two mothers nursing/pumping and one caregiver changing an infant's diaper). Electrical fans were placed inside of the curtained areas to provide a cool breeze during periods of warm weather. Water bottles were distributed to hydrate the tent's users. Hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes were stationed through the space so that we could properly disinfect the areas after usage. Similar setups were used at Bud Walton Arena for men's basketball games and at Barnhill Arena for women's gymnastics meets. At the front of the Tiny Tusks tent was a large, white table where certified lactation consultants answered specific questions about breastfeeding as well as more general questions about women and infants health. In accordance with the Southeastern Conference's (SEC) clear bag policy for athletic events, we distributed clear, plastic totes with the Tiny Tusks logo on them as both a promotional gift and an educational one because the tote

was filled with many of our own educational handouts and pamphlets. Also, the tent was staffed with senior students pursuing Bachelor of Science in Nursing during their community health clinical who helped administer the various engaging projects (temporary tattoos, coloring sheets, stickers) for siblings and young children. Before participating in the project, the nursing students in their community health clinical completed an online Medela Breastfeeding Course to improve their understanding of breastfeeding. Also, they completed pre-survey and post-survey both with seventy-five questions to illustrate their improvement of their understanding of breastfeeding. A tall white sign with the Tiny Tusks name and logo was positioned far in front of the tent to direct fans. Other promotional activities included dispensing small stickers of the Tiny Tusks pig to fans, wearing T-shirts with the Tiny Tusks name and logo, and updating our Facebook page with the latest information.

Results

After using the Tiny Tusks tent, willing participants had the opportunity to complete a survey so that we could better understand their evaluation of the tent. The survey asked the participants questions about their breastfeeding history, preference of feeding/pumping in public, how participants learned about the breastfeeding support location, and if the Tiny Tusks space influenced willingness to attend the event. The data from each survey was collected and analyzed to provide specific details on the impact of Tiny Tusk tent. When forty-four participants were asked about the “Likelihood of bringing a baby to games if there is a breastfeeding area”, 100% of them said “I would feel more comfortable and enjoy bringing my baby with me”; this confirms the need for a space to breastfeed at athletic events. There was evidence of significant satisfaction in terms of overall experience, staff, and environment. When participants were

surveyed about the “overall satisfaction” of the tent, 100% of thirty-seven participants reported that they were “strongly satisfied” with the friendliness of the staff, 100% of thirty-six participants reported that they were “strongly satisfied” with the tent’s cleanliness, 93.94% of thirty-six participants reported that they were “strongly satisfied” with the tent’s privacy, 100% of thirty-six participants reported that they were “strongly satisfied” with the tent’s convenience, and 97.22% of thirty-six participants reported that they were “strongly satisfied” with the educational materials provided. Results exhibited a strong likelihood of the surveyed participants to recommend use of the Tiny Tusk tent because when thirty-seven participants were asked about the “Likelihood of recommending the tent to friends and family”, 97.30% said that they would “strongly recommend” the tent to friends and family. In the “additional comments” section of the survey, participants wrote: “Please keep this program up! It makes it so much easier to get to do fun things, like go to football games, without worrying about if I’ll have a place to feed that’s not a bathroom!” and “Staff amazing. So thankful! Made coming to the game so much of a convenience.” The fans’ overall satisfaction of Tiny Tusks tent led to the University of Arkansas Athletic Department asking us to continue the project with men’s basketball games and select women’s gymnastic meets. Also, our project was accepted for a poster presentation at the National Student Nurses’ Association’s 68th Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida, further illustrating the success of the Tiny Tusks project. These results are important because they show strong support that we accurately completed the Tiny Tusks project’s mission of supporting the promotion of breastfeeding by adequately providing a clean, private space for mothers/caregivers to nurse, pump or change their infant’s diaper at University of Arkansas home athletic events.

Throughout this experience, I learned about the many benefits of breastfeeding, contraindications to breastfeeding, common complications related to breastfeeding that a mother can endure, nursing interventions used to improve a mother's experience with breastfeeding, the legal rights surrounding breastfeeding, human milk banks, and the logistical difficulties surrounding breastfeeding. This project allowed me to further my knowledge on women and infants health, but more importantly it gave me an opportunity to see nursing from a community health prospective. I was able to converse with the mothers/caregivers about their own trials and tribulations with breastfeeding and caring for a child. I learned that many mothers/caregivers take one day at a time, and that everyone's experience with feeding their child is different. As a nurse, I need to provide my patients with empathy and compassion and the Tiny Tusks program allowed me to practice these emotional states. In addition, Tiny Tusks provided many teaching opportunities when interacting with those students who were volunteering to staff the tent. Altogether, the Tiny Tusk: Breastfeeding and Infant Support Tent was a wonderful community service opportunity that gave me much deeper understanding of many aspects of women and infants health, particularly breastfeeding.

Conclusion

The overall goal of the Tiny Tusks: Breastfeeding and Infant Support Tent was completed based on the evidence of significant satisfaction and a strong likelihood of the surveyed individuals to recommend use of the Tiny Tusk tent to friends and family. We, the honors students pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, were able to witness firsthand the gratitude of those mothers/caregivers who used the services of the Tiny Tusk tent. Through the opportunity of having a clean and private area to breastfeed, pump or change an infant's diaper at

home athletic events, the University of Arkansas provided the ongoing support needed for mothers to continue breastfeeding their infant. The Eleanor Mann School of Nursing created, designed, and implemented the The Tiny Tusks project to facilitate this support. We recommend that the Tiny Tusk program continue to further promote the acceptance and normalization of breastfeeding in today's society. We also recommend that the Tiny Tusks program expand to more University of Arkansas home athletic events and other local Fayetteville events to best serve the Northwest Arkansas community.

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