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Brittany Lyons

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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Lyons, B. (2020). Implementation of Tiny Tusks: A Breastfeeding and Infant Support Space at The University of Arkansas Athletic Events. *The Eleanor Mann School of Nursing Undergraduate Honors Theses* Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/nursuht/119>

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Implementation of Tiny Tusks: A Breastfeeding and Infant Support Space at The University of
Arkansas Athletic Events

An honors internship in defense of a degree of Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Brittany Lyons

May 2020

University of Arkansas

Abstract

This honors thesis focuses on my internship of assisting in the design and management of a breastfeeding and infant support space at home athletic events at The University of Arkansas with emphasis on the importance and the promotion of breastfeeding. Breastfeeding provides a wide variety of benefits for mother and infant and I have been honored to work and assist in building Tiny Tusks Breastfeeding and Infant Support Tent and the implementation of these ideas. This honors internship has allowed me to increase my knowledge on the positive aspects of breastfeeding, as well as promote community involvement by collaborating with senior nursing students in their community clinical rotation as they participated in management of the space. During this internship, I was given the opportunity to involve myself in specialized training through modules, assist in creating the physical breastfeeding space, work closely with other students and staff to provide our community with a clean and private breastfeeding space, and collect data through a collection of participant surveys. An evaluation of the internship experience and how it shaped my knowledge and opinions as I enter the workforce as a registered nurse, is discussed.

Introduction to Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is extremely beneficial for both the infant and mother. In terms of digestion alone, the protein, calcium, and iron are absorbed and digested better and easier than the comparative components in cow's milk (American Pregnancy Organization, 2019). Breastmilk contains over 20 different compounds of amino acids, nucleotides, hormones, vitamins, and minerals that promote growth, aid in development, regulate appetite, encourage healthy sleeping patterns, initiate immune response, promote bonding, and protect the brain (Medela, 2017). The oligosaccharides, or complex sugars, in the breastmilk serve as prebiotics and encourage a healthy digestive system and decrease inflammation in the brain (Medela, 2017). Breastmilk contains many different growth factors that support development of vital organ structures, as well as immunoglobins that serve as antibodies to neutralize bacteria and boost the immune response (Medela, 2017).

Breastmilk also changes its composition depending on the needs of the infant. For example, if the infant is need of a higher fat content for a growth spurt, the milk will aid in this growth and change its composition to have a higher fat concentration. Breastmilk will also provide necessary specialized antibodies when the infant is ill and promote recovery (Medela, 2019). According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2020), breast milk protects infants from bacteremia, diarrhea, respiratory infections, urinary tract infections, necrotizing enterocolitis, otitis media, sepsis, diabetes, obesity, lymphoma, and leukemia. Initiating breastfeeding soon after delivery promotes healing in the mother by ceasing excessive bleeding and allowing the mother's uterus to contract efficiently (American Pregnancy Organization,

2019). Breastfeeding has also been shown to decrease the risk for ovarian, endometrial, and breast cancer, as well as promote a pre-pregnancy weight (Medela, 2019).

Breastfeeding Legislation

According to the Centers for Disease Control (2019), 84% of infants are exclusively breastfed in the first 6 months of their lives. Despite the prevalence and powerful effects of breastmilk, the legalization of public breastfeeding has lagged. It was not until 2010 that The Affordable Care Act, with a provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act, stated that it is required for employers to allow breastfeeding mothers to be offered “reasonable break time” for expressing milk for up to one year (Johnson, T., Bradford, K., & Garcia, A., 2020). However, despite this positive advancement, compensation for this time is not required to be provided. Another provision from the Fair Labor Standards Act states that employers must provide a clean non-bathroom space for the expression of breastmilk (Johnson, T, et al., 2020). In 2019, the Fairness for Breastfeeding Mothers Act stated that some public health buildings would be required to have a similar clean, non-bathroom space, with the inclusion of a shield, a chair, a working surface, and an electrical outlet for the same purpose of expressing milk (Johnson, T, et al., 2020). As of July 2018, public breastfeeding is permitted in all 50 states, arguably the largest advancement thus far.

Implementation

Tiny Tusks fully supports public breastfeeding and believes these legal advancements are necessary in the overall promotion of breastfeeding. However, mothers still find themselves dealing with shaming when they decide to breastfeed in a public space. According to American author and reporter Katherine Rosman, the shaming stems from the breasts being “highly sexualized” in modern society, as well as certain religious reasoning

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(Rosman, 2020). Some individuals have more conservative religious views towards breastfeeding and believe the female body should only be exposed in private. Rosman states that even “the sight of women breastfeeding” can make these conservative individuals “extremely uncomfortable” (Rosman, 2020). Many mothers also find themselves feeling uncomfortable when they are forced to feed their baby in a public space, or when they experience criticism, and enjoy a more private location where they feel safe from any public shaming. Although advancements are slowly being made in overall support of public breastfeeding, the focus of the organization is to provide a clean, quiet, and private space to breastfeed or pump if a mother chooses to leave the loud environment of an athletic event. A private environment where the mother feels safe from shaming can also support infant relaxation and bonding between the mother and infant.

I was given the opportunity to begin this internship when Tiny Tusks was still in the developmental stages. This included assisting in research, planning, and design of the tent for football games. I also aided in putting together furniture, such as a changing table and rocking chairs, and assisted in transporting these necessities to the football stadium. During basketball season, I also assisted in transfer and set up to Bud Walton Arena.

The breastfeeding facility we provided was staffed by mentor and certified lactation consultant, Dr. Allison Scott and mentor Dr. Kelley Vowell-Johnson, honors students pursuing a degree in a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and last semester nursing students in their community clinical rotation fulfilling their clinical requirements. Tiny Tusks is available at all home football and basketball games, as well as select gymnastics meets. The breastfeeding space provided a changing table, a diaper genie, a rocking chair, a foot stool, a fan, a blanket, and cold

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bottles of water. There are two “rooms” located in the space, each separated to promote even further privacy.

In order to make the experience as calming as possible for the mother, we provided activities for young children while the mother utilized the tent. These activities include face painting, coloring sheets, stickers, and temporary tattoos. The mothers who used the tent were also provided with a SEC stadium compliant bag that contained pamphlets and brochures on breastfeeding and infant related material.

Surveys

When the mother had completed pumping or breastfeeding, she was asked if she would like to complete a survey with questions related to her experience and the organization as a whole. These results were recorded and analyzed at the end of the season to evaluate the overall satisfaction of our breastfeeding space. According to our results, 100% of mothers are more likely to bring their baby to the sporting games if there is a designated breastfeeding area, 100% of mothers were strongly satisfied with the friendliness of staff and the cleanliness of the space, 93.94% of mothers were strongly satisfied with the privacy of the space, and 97.3% of mothers were likely to recommend the space to friends and family.

Education

In preparation for opening Tiny Tusks at the first football game, I completed extensive research on breastmilk and how implementation of the breastfeeding space would benefit the community. I also had the opportunity to complete educational modules by Medela recommended by my mentor, Dr. Allison Scott, to increase my knowledge on breastfeeding and infants. Upon completion of these modules, I gained my certifications in Human Milk & Breastfeeding Science and Technology for Nursing Students and Understanding Infant Mental

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Health and the Impact of Developmental Trauma. Both of these certifications will guide me in my career as a nurse to provide better quality care for infants. They also provided me with knowledge to share with breastfeeding mothers so that they may also better care for their child.

Conclusion

In addition to assisting in the development and managing the breastfeeding space, I was offered the opportunity to share and present my internship at The National Student Nurses Association annual conference. However, due to COVID-19, the conference was canceled and this was not possible. I do plan to carry my research and knowledge gained into my career as a registered nurse. I strive to be an advocate for breastfeeding mothers and educate individuals on the benefits of breastmilk. I also hope to continue advocating for legislation that promotes breastfeeding or pumping. I believe the future of Tiny Tusks is bright and I hope that the mission we have created, and knowledge we have gained, is expanded to other universities across the United States. I believe that Tiny Tusks could be improved by also expanding locally to a greater portion, and wider range, of University of Arkansas events so that even more families can benefit from the facilities we provide.

This entire experience has been eye-opening to how safe, clean, and private spaces, such as the one operated by Tiny Tusks, is needed. Before I began working with my mentors, Dr. Allison Scott and Dr. Kelley Vowell-Johnson, I was unaware of how vital breastfeeding is to an infant's health. My personal knowledge of breastmilk and the value it offers to an infant and mother's health has grown tremendously and I am excited to share this knowledge in the future. Overall, the benefits of breastfeeding are remarkable and I was motivated to be an intern for an organization that promoted this idea. Most importantly, the mother's that utilized our space were highly satisfied with their experience. I believe we achieved our goal of benefitting families and

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the community as a whole by successfully implementing the space into athletic events. I strongly believe Tiny Tusks has made a large impact on our community with a small change and I hope the organization is seen as an inspiration for others to possibly implement a similar idea onto other university campuses.

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