

EXTENSION PROJECT: THE IMPORTANCE AND CHALLENGES OF EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING

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ABSTRACT

Breastfeeding is one of the most significant stages of the female reproductive process, providing benefits for both the mother and the newborn. (GALLO et al; 2008). Breastfeeding is a physiological process that offers several biopsychosocial advantages for postpartum women. After the placenta leaves, there is a drop in estrogen and progesterone levels, while prolactin levels increase, stimulating milk production by the mammary glands. (AZEVEDO et al, 2010). Despite the recommendations and benefits of breastfeeding, breastfeeding rates are still beyond expectations in many parts of the world, due to various social, cultural and political barriers. Although many women wish to breastfeed, they face difficulties throughout pregnancy and in the postpartum period, which compromises both the beginning and the continuity of the practice. In addition, the lack of professional support for contact and early breastfeeding, as well as the inappropriate use of artificial milk and nipples, are common practices soon after birth. (CARREIRO, Juliana de Almeida et al. 2018). According to MARTINS, M. Z. (2013), breastfeeding brings significant benefits not only to the child, but also to the woman's health. It is essential that mothers are informed about the importance of breastfeeding, understanding that it does not exclusively benefit the child, but also exerts positive influences on the woman's body. According to GIUGLIANI, Elsa RJ, (1994), breast milk, in addition to playing a preventive role in early life, can reduce the risk of chronic diseases related to the immune system, such as autoimmune diseases, diabetes mellitus and lymphomas. In addition, exclusive breastfeeding has been linked to a lower incidence of food allergies and may delay the onset of atopic dermatitis. Breastfeeding offers several benefits for the child, such as improved nutrition, lower infant mortality rate, and reduced hospitalizations. In addition, it contributes to the reduction of allergies, prevents chronic diseases in adult life, favors intellectual development and interpersonal relationship skills, and promotes the healthy development of the oral cavity.

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(BABAKAZO et al., 2015 apud DA SILVA et al, 2022). Breastfeeding plays a fundamental role in craniofacial growth and maturation, being essential for the development of bone, muscle and functional structures. It contributes to the formation of orofacial muscles, essential for physiological functions, in addition to ensuring survival and improving quality of life. In this way, breastfeeding is seen as a preventive measure against possible future problems, by improving the neuromuscular condition of the oral structures for more complex functions. (BERVIAN, J., Fontana, M., & CAUS, B.; 2010). Breastfeeding is the best way to provide food for newborns so that they can have healthy growth and development. It is also an integral part of the reproductive process and has an important impact on maternal health. (WHO, 2005). **OBJECTIVES:** to guide pregnant women, postpartum women and mothers in general who are in the breastfeeding process about positions at the time of breastfeeding, correct latch, the benefits that breastfeeding can bring to mother and baby, in addition to clarifying doubts and talking about the importance and challenges.

METHODOLOGY: This is an extension project developed by nursing students who aim to teach a mini-course on breastfeeding, where we will discuss the following topics: the importance of breastfeeding, benefits it can bring, correct forms of positioning and latching on, in addition to providing guidance on the correct way to perform the choking approach. We will visit the Odete Valadares Maternity Hospital, located at Avenida do Contorno, 9494 - Prado, Belo Horizonte. In addition to the visit, the group will make hygiene kits to distribute to the public as a form of thanks. The expansion of higher education in Brazil facilitates the interaction between academic research and different sectors of society, contributing to significant and satisfactory advances in various areas. (BRAZIL, 2018). **RESULTS:** We arrived at the hospital and were directed to the room where the meeting would take place. We were well received with a coffee and, before we started, the nutritionist made the first presentation, addressing the importance of the foods that pregnant women should consume during pregnancy and after childbirth. Then, the obstetric nurse spoke about the different types of delivery, such as high-risk delivery, high-risk delivery, normal delivery, cesarean section and breech delivery. Soon after, the nurse from the milk bank started the interaction, allowing us to talk to the pregnant women and the couples present. We started by introducing ourselves, informing that we were Nursing students at Estácio College and that we were carrying out an extension project, within the scope of the discipline of Clinical Teaching in Maternal and Child Health, under the guidance of Professor Rosiane. The nurse who accompanied us provided us with materials, such as a doll and artificial breasts, to demonstrate the breastfeeding technique. We address the importance of breastfeeding, the correct way to latch on, proper positioning and what should be avoided during this time. We also clarify some doubts with the help of the nurse. At the end, the group distributed kits containing diapers and wet wipes, while the hospital delivered clothes to the families present. The registration of all activities was done with the proper authorization. To close, a tour of the maternity hospital was carried out, so that everyone could get to know the hospital facilities. **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:** In view of the above, we reiterate that breastfeeding is essential for the well-being of both the baby and the breastfeeding mother. The benefits of this practice are numerous. In addition to providing complete nutrition and immune protection, breastfeeding is a healthy practice that creates and strengthens the bond between mother and child. The extension project and the mini-course were fundamental for the participating students to acquire knowledge about breastfeeding, its importance, the correct way of latching on, the appropriate positions and what should be avoided during this moment between the mother and the newborn. They also allowed a better understanding of the importance of food during pregnancy and postpartum, in addition to the different types of childbirth.

Keywords: Breastfeeding. Benefits. Maternal and child care. Exclusive breastfeeding. Challenges.

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