

ABM News

Breastfeeding Medicine, as the official journal of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, will carry updates on policy and program events at the national and international level. Please address reports of such events to the Editor at: breastfeeding_medicine@urmc.rochester.edu.

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Participation in International Policy Activities

ABM and its directors and members have been active participants in several major international policy and program activities and achievements over the last several months. Perhaps the single greatest step forward has been the Innocenti Meeting, held in November 2005, which led to the 2005 Innocenti Declaration. The meeting was held on the 15th anniversary year of the 1990 Innocenti meeting and Declaration on Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding, which led to the creation of the Global Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative.

As may be seen on the declaration, ABM was one of the organizers, along with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, WABA, IBFAN, ILCA, LLLI, Wellstart International, and the host, the Government of the Tuscany Region of Italy. The full text and presentation of the declaration can be found in several languages at: www.innocenti15.net.

This declaration, addressed and supported in May 2006 by the World Health Assembly (WHA), the annual executive gathering of member states of the World Health Organization, notes:

In the 15 years since the adoption of the original Innocenti Declaration in 1990, remarkable progress has been made in improving infant and young child feeding practices worldwide. Nevertheless, inappropriate feeding practices—sub-optimal or no breastfeeding and inadequate complementary feeding—remain the greatest threat to child health and survival glob-

ally. Improved breastfeeding alone could save the lives of more than 3500 children every day, more than any other preventive intervention. Guided by accepted human rights principles, especially those embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, our vision is of an environment that enables mothers, families and other caregivers to make informed decisions about optimal feeding, and calls for the targets of the 1990 Innocenti Declaration and the 2002 Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding remain the foundation for action. While remarkable progress has been made, much more needs to be done.

The Declaration includes a Call for Action on the part of all parties, including governments, manufacturers and distributors of products within the scope of the International Code, multilateral and bilateral organizations, and international financial institutions, and public interest nongovernmental organizations to ensure that women are empowered in their own right to support and succeed with breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is to be recognized as the norm for feeding infants and young children, with special emphasis on the need for support in emergencies and in the context of human immunodeficiency virus. Parties are asked to dedicate all necessary resources to ensuring that there are national infant and young child feeding and breastfeeding authorities, coordinating committees and oversight groups that are free from commercial influence and other conflicts of interest. Additionally, the declaration calls for a revitalization of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative

(BFHI) and implementation of all provisions of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions. In addition, there is a strong call for maternity protection legislation and other measures that facilitate 6 months of exclusive breastfeeding for women.

Of special additional interest to Breastfeeding Medicine readers is the call to ensure that appropriate guidelines and skill acquisition regarding infant and young child feeding are included in both pre-service and in-service training of all health care staff. This is designed to enable all health care providers to implement infant and young child feeding policies and provide a high standard of breastfeeding management and counseling to support mothers in their practice of optimal breastfeeding and complementary feeding.

The assembled group also noted that these actions are urgent and necessary to ensure the best start in life for our children, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and the realization of the human rights of present and future generations. You may read more about breastfeeding and the Millennium Development Goals at: www.unsystem.org/scn/Publications/AnnualMeeting/SCN31/31_breastfeeding.htm (see especially Table 1).

In addition, ABM, through its memorandum of understanding with the World Association for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), has increased inputs into international program and policy. In turn, WABA represents our interests at the WHA. This year, these efforts also included work in support of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. We also were increasingly active participants in the WABA Steering Committee, and well as their meeting on HIV and infant feeding last

year, and this year's meeting, held at York University, Toronto, on "Gender, Child Survival, and HIV: From Evidence to Policy." The joint statement that emerged from that meeting was a centerpiece of advocacy for evidence-based discussion at the major annual global AIDS conference, the XVIth International AIDS Conference in Toronto, August 13–18, 2006. The declaration is available via the WABA website, which is worth a regular visit: www.waba.org.my.

New initiatives are underway:

- ABM is out in front supporting the new international growth charts, and at least one of our members was central to the development of the new BFHI materials, posted on the UNICEF website at: www.unicef.org/nutrition/index_24850.html.
- ABM has shown support for the revitalization of the baby-friendly initiative in 2005 Innocenti Declaration, but also by endorsing the attendance of representatives from Wellstart International and UNC Center for Infant and Young Child Feeding and Care at the first international Mother and Baby-Friendly Initiative meeting in Geneva, June 2006, that was attended by both WHO and UNICEF.
- Finally, representatives of ABM gave input into new international guidance for infant feeding in emergencies and on the guidance on HIV and infant feeding forthcoming from the International Lactation Consultants Association, and have lent an ABM presence to global meetings in Europe (VELB), the United States (ILCA), and the Centers for Disease Control (growth charts), and elsewhere.

—Submitted by Miriam H. Labbok, M.D., MPH
ABM Past President and Council of Advisors