

OPHA Breastfeeding Promotion Workgroup Annual Report: March 2008-March 2009

The Breastfeeding Promotion Workgroup is a network of individuals and organizations working collaboratively to contribute to the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in the province of Ontario.

Membership and Participation

Participation in the workgroup is 28 members representing 16 health units and including representation from Best Start by Health Nexus: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre, the Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry and the Association of Ontario Midwives. The group benefits from the expertise of numerous public health nurses, two health promotion specialists, three nurse managers of family health programs, a public health nutritionist and a registered dental hygienist.

Position Papers and Resolutions

During this year considerable work has been done to ensure distribution of two position papers and accompanying resolutions developed by the workgroup during 2007. One paper addresses the broader issue of protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding, with a focus on the mediating effect of breastfeeding on the determinants of health. The other paper focuses on the critical issue of informed decision making regarding infant feeding. Both papers are available on the OPHA web site.

Canadian Paediatric Society

The Breastfeeding Promotion Workgroup continued to work with representatives of the Canadian Paediatric Society to enhance their web site communication to parents on the management of dehydration in infants and young children. We are pleased that there has been a revision in the web content and it reflects the importance of breastfeeding support in the management of infant/child illness.

Advocacy for Breastfeeding Provincial Strategy

We continue to have ongoing communication with various professional organizations to advocate for a provincial strategy for the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in Ontario. There is ongoing partnership with the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO), the Childbirth Nurses Interest Group (CNIG) of RNAO and the Ontario Breastfeeding Committee (OBC). Efforts have been made to have a provincial contact person with the Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry (OAPHD), the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (SOGC), the Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS), the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA), the Association of Ontario Midwives (AOM) and the Nurse Practitioners of Ontario (NPAO). There have been several opportunities for advocacy during the past year including a letter from SOGC in response to our Breastfeeding Position Paper and communication with a research analyst of the NDP caucus.

Breastfeeding in Elementary and Secondary Education

Our workgroup provided input to the Ministry of Education regarding the incorporation of breastfeeding education into the curricula for elementary and secondary schools. This was done by attending a meeting in Toronto with the Ministry of Education for Family Studies and Humanities, providing input into the curriculum online and attending provincial sessions designed to provide input into curriculum. A need was expressed by teachers for a kit which would provide teaching lessons/ tools to support teachers in teaching about breastfeeding. This will be one of our goals for the coming year.

Healthy Workplaces

Revisions have been completed to the document, *Creating a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace*, and this is also available on the OPHA website. We are considering options for expanding our distribution of this resource, including a human resources website.

Undergraduate Health Professional Education

The revision of undergraduate health professional modules was completed in electronic form and is being distributed to schools of health care professionals in Ontario. This is to provide the information they need to ensure that best practice breastfeeding information is incorporated into their curricula. We will be planning a way to follow-up in terms of the use of the modules in curriculum preparation.

Chronic Disease Prevention and Breastfeeding

Our group continues to advocate for the role of breastfeeding in the prevention of certain chronic diseases. The effect on decreased risk for obesity and diabetes has been of particular attention. An interview related to the role of breastfeeding in chronic disease prevention was published in the August 2008 newsletter of OCDPA.

Breastfeeding Web Course

The Working Group continues to provide support as needed to Best Start Resource Centre with Health Nexus in order to make available the Breastfeeding Web Course which was originally designed by Simcoe-Muskoka Health Unit. This course will provide a basic knowledge of breastfeeding for those who have some involvement with mothers and babies but who don't require the 18 hour breastfeeding course.

A Glimpse into the Future

The passion and commitment of the members of this working group continues to be demonstrated in their involvement in the development and implementation of countless activities which reflect breastfeeding best practices. We look forward to the year ahead, and welcome any new members who would like to participate in working together to improve breastfeeding initiation and duration rates in Ontario.

