

Magdalena Bednarczyk

**Evaluation of the implementation of early lactation stimulation programs
for neonatology and obstetric centers of the IIIrd grade reference in the
Masovian Voivodeship**

Summary

Introduction: WHO, UNICEF, the American Academy of Pediatrics and nutritional centers have recognized the superiority of mother's milk in a child's nutrition over artificial formulas. Breast milk is adapted to the needs of her child. Breastfeeding has been considered the gold standard in medicine. In premature newborns fed with their mother's milk, improvement in survival rates, reduction in the risk of diseases like necrotizing enterocolitis and retinopathy of prematurity, reduction of infections as well as in the frequency of hospitalizations in the first year of life and improvement in the developmental parameters have been documented. The supply of natural food to a newborn in the Intensive Care Unit should therefore be treated as an element of the treatment process.

Assumptions: In 2014 in Poland the program for 3rd grade reference neonatology and obstetric centers of early lactation stimulation was established. It contains recommendations aimed at unifying the principles of work of medical staff (midwives, nurses, doctors, lactation consultants, neurological therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists) and preparing mothers of premature babies for breastfeeding.

Material and methods: The research was carried out in six hospitals of the third grade reference where the management has agreed to conduct it. The analysis included data collected on 244 premature babies and their mothers. Additionally, the results of a diagnostic survey involving 166 medical staff and the results of an interview with the management staff and snapshot observation were included.

Overall results:

- Despite the implementation of procedures to improve lactation over the years 2014-2021, the percentage of children exclusively breastfed on the day of discharge from hospital is still low
- exclusive formula feeding was used in a group of extremely immature newborns between two 22 and 27 weeks of pregnancy with the body weight below 1000g

- it has been shown that feeding exclusively with mother's milk was used after consultation with the lactation consultant
- most hospitals do not provide lactation training in line with recommendations
- 4 out of 6 hospitals lack breast pumps, breastfeeding pillows and foot rests. 2 of them do not have a lactation room. Most premature babies are not given proper kangaroo-care and the rooming-in system before discharge from the hospital is not attainable for all premature babies.

Conclusions:

- Implementation of procedures to improve lactation after premature birth over the years 2014-2021 did not translate into an increase in the percentage of children exclusively breastfed or fed with expressed breast milk on the day of discharge from the hospital.
- Among the premature babies who were allowed skin-to-skin contact, there were none who were fed only formula milk at discharge.
- The number of cases of feeding exclusively with mother's breastmilk was higher in the group of newborns who were given colostrum on the first day of life.
- The study showed a shortage of equipment that supports lactation stimulation (professional breast pumps, armchairs, pillows for natural breastfeeding, footrests)
- The number and availability of specialists (lactation consultants, psychologists, speech therapists and physiotherapists) who support lactation varies depending on the hospital, but is still insufficient.

Summary of conclusions:

The study confirms the need for further support in the area of early lactation stimulation. In order to improve breastfeeding rates among premature babies, systemic supervision by persons implementing the Program with procedures, training and applicable recommendations should be implemented.