

Wellness and Public Health

Exploring factors related to infant feeding in women intending to exclusively breastfeed in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

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Introduction: Breastfeeding provides immense benefits for both mother and child, including a decrease incidence of disease. Historically, Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) has held the lowest rates. In NL, 75.7% of women report an intention to breastfeed their child, and 72.4% initiate breastfeeding while in hospital. These rates significantly decline following discharge from the hospital, with one study showing 5.8% exclusively breastfeeding (EBF) at 6 months postpartum.

Objectives: To estimate the number of women who intended to EBF their child, estimate the number of infants born to mothers that were EBF after birth and at the time of the first postpartum survey, and identify factors related to those EBF vs. non EBF for infants.

Methods: a secondary data analysis of a prospective study conducted from October 2011-2015 called the “Feeding Infants in Newfoundland and Labrador” (FiNaL) study. Variables of interest include in hospital practices, social support, maternal exposure, along with maternal demographics and biological factors. Our analysis included descriptive statistics, univariate and multivariate analysis to determine possible associations between EBF and other variables.

Results: Our multivariate analysis revealed breastfeeding for a minimum of one month was most strongly associated with personal support system, one hour or more skin-to-skin contact, and not receiving jaundice treatment. We also found that over half of the women reported having free formula sent to their homes.

Conclusions: Breastfeeding initiation rates have been steadily increasing in NL, however duration for EBF is still suboptimal. Many factors appear to influence mothers’ practice of EBF.

Significance: Women tend to be aware of the health benefits of breastfeeding, but still many are unable to reach the World Health Organization’s (WHO) of a minimum of 6 months exclusive breastfeeding. By determining the factors related to EBF, especially in women who do intend to EBF, is essential in providing adequate support to families.

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