Hospital-Based Approach to Improve Exclusive Breastfeeding Rates
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Problem: Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of an infant’s life offers many benefits for both the infant and mother. The Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding for Hospitals (Ten Steps) provide hospitals with the steps needed to support breastfeeding mothers. Methodist Dallas Medical Center serves a diverse, lower socioeconomic population with varying degrees of social support and delivers approximately 300 infants per month. Prior to 2010, none of the Ten Steps were in place at our facility, resulting in low breastfeeding initiation and exclusive breastfeeding rates.

Evidence: Evidence documents the superiority of breastfeeding resulting in better health outcomes for both mother and infant.

Strategy: Implement the Ten Steps one at a time and monitor breastfeeding initiation and exclusive breastfeeding rates to determine how each step and combination of steps impact breastfeeding rates.

Practice Change: Four of the Ten Steps have been implemented: (1) Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth, (2) Show mothers how to breastfeed and how to maintain lactation, even if they are separated from their infants, (3), Give no pacifiers or artificial nipples to breastfeeding infants, and (4) Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic.

Evaluation: Breastfeeding initiation rates within the first hour of birth and exclusive breastfeeding rates have increased. However, exclusive rates remain far below the Healthy People 2020 (goal 46.2% at 3 months) and The Joint Commission Perinatal Care Core Measure Set.

Results: Between 2010-2011, breastfeeding initiation rates within first hour of birth increased from 60% to 80%. Exclusive breastfeeding rates at discharge increased from 9% to 14%.

Recommendations: Implement remainder of Ten Steps gradually over time and monitor breastfeeding initiation and exclusive breastfeeding rates and duration upon discharge and at 3 and 6 months post-discharge.

Lessons Learned: Communication between the Labor & Delivery and Postpartum units is essential in supporting breastfeeding mothers.
Bibliography:


