

Lactation Management Self-Study Modules, Level I

Faculty Guide

Background

Breastfeeding is a primary health care strategy, improving the health of mothers and infants and children as well as lowering the risk of several chronic diseases of adults. Its benefits are well documented. Lack of knowledge of lactation management among health care providers has been a significant contributing factor in the failure to reach breastfeeding rates set by the U.S. government for the Year 2000 National Health Objectives. If these national goals, recently updated for 2010¹ are to be reached this must change.

An important reason for this lack of knowledge is that many schools of medicine, nursing and nutrition have not integrated lactation management education into their curricula. In response to this issue, Wellstart International in collaboration with the University of California San Diego Medical School and with funding from The Maternal Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration developed the *Lactation Management Curriculum: a faculty guide for schools of medicine, nursing and nutrition* (LMCG), now in its fourth edition (1999).

The LMCG was developed to facilitate the integration of lactation management knowledge and skills into the curriculum of medicine, nursing and nutrition programs. Throughout the pre-clinical and clinical curriculum, the breastfed infant and the breastfeeding mother should be presented as the norm rather than the exception. When infant growth assessment is discussed, data on the growth of the breastfed infant can be presented. Instruction on breast exam can include issues for the lactating woman and can address the rare conditions that impact lactation. During a surgery clerkship, the issues concerning breast conditions and surgery in the lactating woman should be covered, and options for maintaining lactation in the event of any type of surgery should be discussed. No matter what specialty health professionals ultimately choose, they are likely to encounter a breastfeeding woman and/or her infant. Lactation management is best integrated throughout the curriculum.

The LMCG is a competency based tool and provides curriculum suggestions and resources for three levels of professional responsibility. Level I is intended for all health care providers, Level II is targeted at those who practice in one of the perinatal specialties (pediatrics, obstetrics, neonatology, etc). Level III is designed for those who will specialize in lactation medicine and will serve as key faculty in leadership positions

¹ U.S. National Goals for 2010
Newborn initiation 75%
6 months of age 50%
12 months of age 25%

Level I

The Lactation Management Curriculum Guide is focused on the needs of normal mothers and their healthy full term infants. It is divided into three levels of expertise. Level I is the basic level -- the knowledge and skills that should be attained by all health care professionals during their initial preparatory program. All professionals regardless of whether or not they normally provide care for breastfeeding mothers and infants should know this level of knowledge and skills. A provider at Level I should have a basic understanding about the scientific evidence, clinical management of the normal mother and newborn, and societal context of lactation to provide health care that supports breastfeeding initiation and maintenance, and avoids creating barriers. All health care providers need to be aware of the principles of lactation management, but do not necessarily need to attain clinical expertise in the area.

For example, a surgeon who treats a lactating patient needs to know how the surgical procedures and required medications will affect the patient's ability to breastfeed. He or she should be able to coordinate care with other providers so the mother's possibility of initiating or continuing breastfeeding is optimized. The surgeon should be able to ascertain the issues involved and make appropriate referrals.

Level II

All physicians, nurses and nutritionists specializing in some aspect of maternal/child health should reach Level II knowledge and skills. These providers should have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide routine lactation management and support. This includes routine prenatal and postpartum counseling and the management of common concerns and complications. They should know when and how to seek the assistance of a lactation specialist or lactation consultant. Level II should be attained by the time the perinatal health care professional finishes training in his/her specialty area. In both medicine and nursing, this would be at the graduate level.

Level III

Level III represents health professionals who specialize in lactation medicine, nursing or nutrition. Faculty responsibility for teaching this subject would also be considered Level III.

Other health care professionals important to the field of lactation medicine are those from pharmacology, and occupational therapy. Their specialized knowledge and skills make them essential contributors. Basic level I knowledge is important for all care providers in the specialties. Many who focus their professional attention on mothers and/or infants will find level III of value.

Self-Study Modules

With further support from The Maternal Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration a set of three clinically oriented self study modules designed to help users achieve level I knowledge were prepared. Initially published in 2000, these three level I modules have been revised and updated to incorporate important new evidenced based knowledge and skills. The modules provide a self-contained unit of basic knowledge that can be utilized by faculty, students, and other health care professionals in a variety of settings. They cover the scientific evidence for recommending breastfeeding as the ideal way to feed infants; physiology and basic management strategies; solutions to common breastfeeding problems. They can be assigned during clinical rotations in pediatrics, family medicine, nutrition, obstetrics, or community health. Each institution should decide where the modules would have the most impact in their curriculum.

Field testing has verified that the three modules can be completed within a 4-hour time frame, an average *1-1½ hours per module, including two videotapes.*² Within this limited time period, only the basic information can be covered. Additional bedside rounds or clinical experiences are essential to enhance application of the knowledge to real mother/infant situations.

Description of the Modules

This series of three modules builds on each other. They should be completed in the order presented:

Module 1: Breastfeeding as a Primary Health Care Strategy

- ◆ Milk composition
- ◆ Benefits of human milk and breastfeeding
- ◆ Infant feeding and growth
- ◆ Maternal nutrition during lactation
- ◆ Influences on the breastfeeding decision
- ◆ Prenatal Counseling questions
- ◆ Community resources

Module 2: Basics of Breastfeeding: getting started

- ◆ Anatomy and physiology of lactation

² Recommended videos:

1.) Dr. Lennart Righard's "Delivery Self Attachment" can be obtained via www.geddesproduciton.com
2.) "Breastfeeding: A Guide to Successful Positioning" can be obtained via www.childbirthgraphics.com

- ◇ Positioning and attachment for effective breastfeeding
- ◇ Evaluating a breastfeed
- ◇ Feeding routines
- ◇ Anticipatory guidance
- ◇ Early hospital routines
- ◇ Discharge Planning and follow-up

Module 3: Common Breastfeeding Problems

- ◇ Common maternal problems
- ◇ Common infant problems
- ◇ Special medical problems
- ◇ Contraception during breastfeeding
- ◇ Separation of mother and infant
- ◇ Resources

Each session utilizes the following format:

- ◇ Breastfeeding case presentation
- ◇ Common questions and answers (content)
- ◇ Case exercise: “How will you help this mother?” with answers

The set of materials includes a collection of handouts called “Highlights”, formatted to the size of a page in a small notebook. “Highlights” includes clinical aids such as counseling questions and “Recommendations for Adequate Breast Milk Intake”.

Two videotapes are recommended to augment the information contained in the written modules. “Delivery Self-Attachment” (6 minutes) demonstrates the newborn’s ability to find the nipple and suckle soon after birth. “Breastfeeding: A Guide to Successful Positioning” runs approximately 12 minutes and includes management techniques. The video is useful for demonstrating the attachment of an infant to the breast and the movements of the baby’s facial muscles during breastfeeding, actions that are better understood by viewing a moving picture. Sources for obtaining these videos can be found on page 3 of this section.

Faculty Preparation

It is recommended that faculty members themselves work through the modules and view the videos to become familiar with the content, exercises, and accompanying materials. While the modules themselves are designed for independent self study, the videotapes can be viewed by a group of students at a specified time, put in the library or learning center, or checked out to individuals for a limited time for viewing at home. Assigned faculty should determine what will be most effective in their setting.

As previously mentioned, the format of the modules provides application of the material by means of a short case exercise. The information in the modules should be enhanced by a structured clinical experience such as bedside rounds so students can apply their new knowledge to a realistic setting. The clinical instructor should be able to help the student carry out the breastfeeding assessment and problem solving steps. It is essential that faculty think of ways to incorporate clinical observation or practice into the student's experience.