

## World Breastfeeding Week: 20 years of promoting, protecting and supporting maternal breastfeeding

In the month of August, we celebrated World Breastfeeding Week, which was created by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), a non-government organization based in Penang, Malaysia. During its first meeting, in February 1991, in New York, the WABA proposed an international mobilization event to promote breastfeeding.

The initial suggestion was for a World Breastfeeding Day to commemorate the approval of the Innocenti Declaration, signed on 1 August 1990, during a meeting held by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Later it was agreed that a whole week would be more effective and World Breastfeeding Week (WBW), which has been commemorated internationally between 1 and 7 August since 1992, was the result. Around 70 countries, including Brazil, took part in the first WBW. Nowadays more than 150 countries are registered to participate, with the involvement of governments, children-friendly hospitals, human milk banks, non-government organizations and local communities.

WABA is responsible for identifying a topic by way of international debates and publicizing this, focusing each year on one of the various aspects of maternal breastfeeding and calling on various countries to work on the chosen theme.

Between 1992 and 1995 the chosen themes addressed the goals of the Innocenti Declaration, publicizing the Child-Friendly Hospital Initiative (CFHI) in 1992; Women, Work and Breastfeeding in 1993; the International Code of Ethics for Human Milk Substitutes in 1994; and Empowering Women through Breastfeeding in 1995.

The following is a list of topics addressed by the WBW between 1996 and 2011:

- \*Breastfeeding: everybody's responsibility;
- \*Breastfeeding is an ecological act;
- \*Breastfeeding is the best investment;
- \*Breastfeeding is education for life;
- \*Breastfeeding is a right for all;
- \*Breastfeeding in the information era,
- \*Breastfeeding: healthy mothers and babies;
- \*Breastfeeding in a globalized world: for peace and justice;
- \*Exclusive breastfeeding: health, safety and smiles;
- \*Continuing breastfeeding along with healthy and safe homemade food complements;
- \*The International Code, 25 years protecting breastfeeding;
- \*Breastfeeding in the first hour of life, protection without delay;
- \*In breastfeeding, women's support comes first;
- \*Breastfeeding in life-saving emergencies;
- \*Breastfeeding: ten fundamental steps towards making a good start;
- \*Breastfeeding: talk to me in 3D.

In Brazil, in 2004, the Ministry of Health, in partnership with the Brazilian Pediatric Association, started the initiative, "Godmother of WBW", in which a celebrity breastfeeder is invited to serve as a model for others.

2010 was an exception to this. This year the WBW addressed the ten steps towards successful breastfeeding established by the Child-Friendly Hospital Initiative. And, as the Instituto de Medicina Integral Professor Fernando Figueira (IMIP), sponsor of the Brazilian Journal of Mother and Child Health (BJMCH), was the first hospital in Brazil to receive this title in 1992, WBW was officially opened at IMIP and the "celebrity" breastfeeder was a Brazilian Public Health (SUS) patient from this institution.

The history of the child-friendly hospital initiative at IMIP in fact began before approval of the Internatio-

nal Code on the Sale of Mother's Milk Substitutes, in Geneva, in 1981. Prof. Fernando Figueira, founder and then president of IMIP, and also at the time Pernambuco State Health Secretary, introduced Ministerial Directive N° 99, published in the *Diário Oficial do Estado de Pernambuco*, on 3 December 1974. This ruling prohibits the distribution of cans of powdered milk and babies' bottles to mothers in hospitals and health units belonging to the State of Pernambuco and organizations linked to them.

When the Brazilian Ministry of Health began to introduce the CFHI in Brazil, in 1992, the Human Milk Bank and IMIP's Maternal Breastfeeding Incentive Center (BLH/CIAMA/IMIP) had already been working, since 1987, on Step 2 – Training the whole health-care team in the practices needed for implementing maternal breastfeeding, as well as Steps 5 – Showing mothers how to breastfeed and how to maintain lactation even when separated from their children; 6 – not offering newborns any food or drink other than mother's milk, unless advised otherwise by a doctor; 7 – Allowing mothers and newborns to stay together 24 hours a day; 8 – encouraging breastfeeding on demand; 9 – Not giving breastfed children pacifiers and 10 – promoting the formation of breastfeeding support groups and referring women to these groups when they are discharged from maternity; even before the initiative had been created in the early 1990s.

The only need for adjustment concerned Step 1 –having a written maternal breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to the whole health-care team; Step 3 – Informing all pregnant women regarding the benefits and management of maternal breastfeeding; and Step 4 – helping mothers to initiate breastfeeding in the first hour after birth.

The history of the CFHI at IMIP and the commemoration of WBW is directly linked to the BLH/CIAMA/IMIP and its founder, Prof. Fernando Figueira, who, in 1986, set up the "Revista do IMIP", which appeared every year until 2000 and was the immediate precursor of the BJMCH. All of these have shared in successful stories of promoting, protecting and providing support for maternal breastfeeding, not only at IMIP, but also in various States and municipalities in Brazil, thereby helping to increase the prevalence of maternal breastfeeding in Brazil and thus reduce precocious weaning and its negative impact on child morbidity and mortality.

For all these reasons, the BJMCH is also delighted, throughout its still short history, to have contributed by spreading scientific knowledge through articles on maternal breastfeeding of infants in Brazil and around the world.

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