

A Preliminary Scoping Study Investigating Breastfeeding Education and Confidence in Obstetric and Gynaecology Junior Doctors



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INTRODUCTION

- Current literature suggests that mothers' need education and support to breastfeed successfully¹.
- However, 39% of Australian mothers exclusively breastfeed to 3 months and 15% to 5 months², which is less than the recommended duration of 6 months exclusive breastfeeding³. The primary reason for not continuing to breastfeed is breastfeeding related challenges that are easy to address and manage by trained professionals².
- Nevertheless, many junior doctors caring for breastfeeding mothers lack confidence and education to educate and support women.
- Currently it is not known how much or what education is provided to junior doctors working in O&G to support their role in delivering breastfeeding counseling and management to their patients, or whether this is of high quality.

OBJECTIVES

- To investigate breastfeeding knowledge, attitudes and education of O&G junior medical staff and evaluate their confidence in educating, assessing and managing breastfeeding women.

METHODOLOGY

- An anonymous online survey was sent to the O&G junior medical staff (residents, registrars and fellows) at the Royal Hospital for Women in May 2021.
- The Royal Hospital for Women is a tertiary "breast-feeding friendly" hospital which promotes breastfeeding.
- The survey consisted of 22 questions to identify doctors' current attitudes and knowledge regarding breastfeeding and attendance at education about breastfeeding.

RESULTS

- Nineteen junior medical staff members were included in this study. There was a 79% response rate.
- All participants agreed that they played an important role in breastfeeding education.
- 20% of respondents felt that they had received adequate breastfeeding education and training. Nearly 90% did not feel confident in managing breastfeeding related issues.
- Approximately 80% said that they would value more formal breastfeeding education.

CONCLUSION

- Our preliminary findings highlight inadequate breastfeeding training and a lack of confidence among O&G junior medical staff and interest in further education.
- Given that inadequate knowledge contributes to limited provision of support and management of breastfeeding mothers, implementing formalized education and training in lactation medicine will ensure better-equipped doctors and ultimately improve mother and infant care.
- Further research is planned to evaluate whether other doctors working in obstetrics lack knowledge and confidence and education about breastfeeding.

REFERENCES

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