

Medical Updates ~ contributed by Debbie Graham, Administrator of Professional Liaison

Kaleidoscope acknowledges the generosity of Liz Lightfoot, Editor of Mosaic in allowing us to reprint these three articles. The first article is especially pertinent as O & G specialist, Dr Alison Barrett spoke to the LLLNZ Alumnae Reunion delegates about the changes in childbirth procedures that have taken place over recent years.

Babies' first bacteria depend on birthing method

The results of a new study, reported in *ScienceDaily* (June 24, 2010) backs up what has been known for some time. The study indicates that the delivery method of babies has a big effect on the types of microbial communities they harbour. These findings will have potential implications for the health of infants.

The study showed that the skin of babies delivered vaginally had communities of bacteria like their mother's vaginal bacteria, while babies born by Caesarian section had common skin bacteria. This might relate to increased health risks in C-section babies as the bacterial communities of infants could come from the first person to handle the baby.

Previous studies indicate babies born via C-section can be more susceptible to certain pathogens, allergies and asthma than babies born vaginally. The researchers believe that human microbial communities play an important role in digestion and immune health. Essentially, these microbial communities act as the baby's first vaccination with breastfeeding following as the next essential component.

Talking about breastfeeding: why the health argument isn't enough

This is a link to a thought-provoking, 24-page article: www.bmsg.org/pdfs/BMSG_Issue_18.pdf

For women in NZ and in the USA wishing to breastfeed – and a good percentage initiating breastfeeding – something happens along the way that discourages more than half of them from continuing to breastfeed exclusively.

Learn about “frames” and how they affect our society's attitudes and our everyday conversations, media cover-

age, hospital and government policies: “Frames affect whether we see breastfeeding as something normal or deviant; healthy or unnecessary; admirable or offensive. They influence whether we see a woman's breasts as delivery systems for food or symbols for sex”. The article discusses the frames of a good mother: the good mother in the modern world; nature vs modernity: exploiting the good mother; experts vs mothers. It has recommendations for breastfeeding advocates such as doing more media advocacy. Lastly it recommends media reporters to investigate why women breastfeed for less than they intend to, to explore the full range of the benefits of breastfeeding and lastly to put women into context. It states, “The primary target is never the general public. The object of media advocacy is to put pressure on decision makers to make the right decision for the public's health. Media advocates focus on getting news coverage to put pressure on those decision makers. Secondary audiences are those people who can put direct pressure on the primary target. Educating the general public happens in the context of reaching the primary target, usually a policy maker or governing body.”

The article concludes: “A society that supports breastfeeding – in all its institutions, from hospitals to workplaces – is a society that supports families and healthy communities.”

Australian Government announces BPA baby bottle phase out

There is some good news to ease the concerns of Australian parents with a government announcement that major retailers will start to voluntarily phase out baby bottles containing the artificial hormone Bisphenol A (BPA). It is not FSANZ regulated.

Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Mr. Butler said. “Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has evaluated the safety of BPA and plasticisers in baby bottles and concluded that levels of intake of BPA or plasticisers are very low and do not pose a risk to babies' health. However, the US Food and Drug Administration announced earlier this year that it is carrying out further research into the risks for babies and infants associated with BPA.” The United States, Canada and a number of European countries have already responded to consumer concern by introducing voluntary withdrawals of BPA-containing baby bottles from the market.



Californian decision re BPA

In June, the California Assembly passed a bill banning the artificial hormone BPA in feeding products, including formula, for children three years old and younger. It is called the Toxin-Free Babies and Toddlers Act. Health problems such as infertility, autism, asthma, hyperactivity and breast cancer have been linked with BPA. The Assembly has called for more studies of this artificial hormone that is often used in shatter-proof plastic baby bottles, sippy cups and linings of cans, **including those containing baby formula.**

This will also be of concern to parents in New Zealand who may store expressed breast milk in bottles contain-