

BREASTFEEDING TIMES

NOVEMBER 2013

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 9

Good News on the Obesity Front: A Testament to WIC by Dana Wagner, Community Bridges WIC Program

There was good news in August from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) about the obesity epidemic in America. Data from the CDC showed that from 2008-2011, obesity rates among low-income preschoolers declined in 19 of 43 states and U.S. territories.

The CDC looked at height and weight data from approximately 11.6 million low-income children. The children, aged 2 – 4 years, from 40 states, the District of Columbia, and two U.S. territories participated in the Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System during 2008-2011 and used these data to estimate State obesity rates. The data showed a statistically significant downward trend in obesity prevalence in 18 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

While the CDC said that it could not attribute these changes in obesity prevalence to any specific factor, three trends are being held up by health experts as encouraging developments:

- Improvements in the nutritional content of foods provided by the WIC Program,
- A greater percentage of moms participating in WIC who are



breastfeeding, and

- Anti-obesity initiatives focused on physical activity and increased access to healthy foods.

We know that about half of all infants born in the U.S. participate in WIC and, of infants born in California in 2010, 63% were enrolled in WIC. Prior to the CDC study, research by the Altarum Institute showed that the 2009 changes in WIC foods, in conjunction with nutrition education received at WIC, positively influenced food shopping and consumption practices by WIC participants.

For many years, WIC has been designing interactive, participant-centered classes and using motivational interviewing to help participants make positive behavior changes. Local agencies have

developed classes that teach participants to make healthy choices at the grocery store and to make healthy recipes using WIC foods.

The CDC's 2013 Breastfeeding Report Card shows that 77% of U.S. mothers initiate breastfeeding, up from 74% in 2009. Many experts assert that there is a dose-response relationship between breastfeeding and obesity prevention. A recent nationwide study in Japan further supports this conclusion.

While obesity continues to be a troublesome national epidemic, the current CDC study is encouraging. WIC's interventions to improve nutrition and increase breastfeeding may be paying off.

While we at WIC celebrate these data and positive change within our communities, we remain mindful of a deep desire to see a healthy lifestyle among all California residents as the norm. With such a complex issue, we recognize that each of us has a unique role in making this vision a reality for our children. 

Tie Your Pink Ribbon with a Gold Bow by Tina Lavy, Sutter County WIC



October was Breast Cancer Awareness Month. This annual international health campaign is organized by major breast cancer charities to increase awareness of breast cancer and raise funds for research into its cause, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure. The campaign also offers information and support to

those affected by breast cancer. A variety of events around the world are organized in October, including walks and runs, and the pink illumination of landmark buildings. In 1991, the Susan G. Komen Foundation handed out pink ribbons to participants in its New York City race for breast cancer survivors. In 1993 Evelyn Lauder, Senior Corporate Vice President of the Estée Lauder Companies, who founded

The Breast Cancer Research Foundation, established the pink ribbon as the symbol of breast cancer.

For 10 years, I have had a pink ribbon tied with a gold bow on a bulletin board over my desk. A small sign on the board says, "Ask me why my pink ribbon is wrapped in a gold bow." Often, I get asked by moms, dads and grandmas, "Why IS your pink ribbon wrapped in a gold bow?" I ask them if they (cont.)

Tie Your Pink Ribbon with a Gold Bow by Tina Lavy, Sutter County WIC

(cont.) know what the pink ribbon symbolizes and they always respond "breast cancer." I tell them the gold bow is a symbol of breastfeeding. Then I say, "Studies have shown that by breastfeeding, a mother can reduce her risk for breast cancer. The longer she breast feeds, the lower the risk." Most are quiet for a minute and then say, "Wow, I didn't know." One grandmother, who shared that she was a breast cancer survivor, said softly, "I wish I had known that." It brought tears to my eyes.

Sometimes, in my breastfeeding support classes, I share with moms this information: Alison Stuebe, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology once said "Public health begins with breastfeeding." In a recent study, breastfeeding led to a nearly 60 percent lower risk of premenopausal breast cancer in women who had a family history of the disease. A different study

showed breastfeeding lowers the mother's risk of breast cancer by 4.3 percent for every year of breastfeeding. "It is a huge reduction in risk," says Amanda Phipps, of Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle.

In the 1950's, fewer than 20 percent of moms breastfed; many were told by pediatricians that formula was just as good as breast milk. It is not. The American Academy of Pediatrics now strongly urges women to breastfeed exclusively for the first six months and continue breastfeeding, with the addition of complementary foods, through the first year or longer. Research continues to show that breastfeeding is not only healthier for babies, but moms too.

Just as the breast cancer awareness campaign has a pink ribbon to symbolize their cause, so does the campaign for breastfeeding. The international symbol for breastfeeding is a gold bow, which

symbolizes that breastfeeding is the gold standard for infant feeding. Why a bow, rather than the looped ribbon of most campaigns? Each part of the bow carries a special message: one loop represents the mother, the other loop represents the child. The ribbon is symmetrical; telling us the mother and child are both vital to successful breastfeeding. The knot is the father, the family and society. Without the knot, there would be no bow; without support, breastfeeding cannot succeed.

If you support breast cancer awareness through the "pink ribbon" campaign, include information to promote breastfeeding. If you are a cancer survivor, wrap your pink ribbon gift with a gold bow and share your story with new moms; let them know, that by breastfeeding, they can help reduce the risk of breast cancer and keep others from the suffering you have endured. ☞

2013 BPC Program Statewide Training Recap



The annual BPC Program Statewide Training was held at the Sacramento Convention Center on Sept. 4-5, 2013. Over 300 Peer Counselors (PCs), PC Supervisors, and International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) attended the valuable two-day training conference.

The theme for this year's training was "Mother to Mother Support." The training covered topics identified by PCs, PC Supervisors, and IBCLCs as most important for their professional development. The PC track of five breakout sessions focused on PC validation, facilitating support groups, questions and answers regarding the

Peer Counseling Database (PCDB), and networking with PCs from other agencies and regions. The PC Supervisor/IBCLC track of five breakout sessions focused on sharing and learning more about leadership, BPC Program guidance, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), and effectively utilizing the PCDB.

On Sept. 5th, all attendees had the opportunity to participate in a morning general session featuring Lisa Marasco, MA, IBCLC, FILCA - a highly acclaimed breastfeeding expert. The session, titled "Recognizing When Things are Headin' South," focused on problems with maternal milk supply. The attendees learned more about delayed lactogenesis, primary and secondary low milk production, risk factors for lactation problems, normal breast changes during pregnancy, and how an infant's suck can affect a mother's milk production.

This year's Statewide Training was a huge success because PCs, PC Supervisors, and IBCLCs were able to

meet, network, learn more about their programs, discuss similar concerns with each other, and address issues pertinent to their roles and professional development. The State WIC BPC Program staff worked together diligently to plan, organize, and facilitate a high quality training experience for all attendees. State WIC received many positive comments about the training including: "The workshops were amazing!", "I thought this training was awesome!", and "Fantastic - The best training I've been to in a while!"

We look forward to seeing all PCs, PC Supervisors, and IBCLCs at the next Statewide Training in 2014! ☞

