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Supporting breastfeeding: it takes a whole community

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In collaboration with the Anglo-European Chiropractic College (AECC), the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences at Bournemouth University hosted a conference in July 2015 to raise awareness of the Joint Chiropractic and Midwifery Newborn Feeding Clinic. The interprofessional approach to facilitating a student-led, newborn infant feeding clinic is an innovative and unique opportunity to provide a positive learning environment for students as well as improve sustained breastfeeding rates for women; a current public health challenge. Learning from skilled, qualified practitioners in a real time practice environment has the ability to enrich the student educational experience. It was felt that a one day interprofessional conference to share good practice from the clinic and listen to the views of women and students would provide a springboard to ensure the clinic continued to meet the needs of those using the facilities.

The clinic was the brainchild of Alison Taylor, Infant Feeding Lead at Bournemouth University and Dr Joyce Miller, Senior Clinical Tutor at the AECC who wanted to pool their knowledge and experience in a joint chiropractic breastfeeding clinic, in order to provide a more effective way to help mothers and babies establish successful breastfeeding. Initially the clinic was set up as a pilot project gaining ethics approval from Bournemouth University Research Ethics Committee and is now an integrated clinical placement for undergraduate midwifery and chiropractic students. The clinic runs for half a day a week at the chiropractic training college. Women can either self-refer, be referred by midwives or by other feeding support practitioners. The woman is seen jointly by students and mentors. Initially the woman's account about her breastfeeding problem is listened to and then a breastfeed is observed. Information to enhance feeding may be offered by the midwife at this point. An assessment of any underlying mechanical problem related to the feed is assessed and if necessary a chiropractic treatment undertaken.

The aim of the conference was to raise the profile of the successful work of the clinic and engender debate and information sharing to address complex breastfeeding problems. The views from women, students, chiropractors, midwives and other health care professionals involved in improving public health would help evaluate the work of the clinic and provide a springboard to improve its role and function within the community.

The conference was able to take place due to the successful Centre for Excellence in Learning Fusion Funding bid from Bournemouth University. The day was attended by health care professionals from across the locality as well as members of the public who were passionate about supporting mothers to breastfeed successfully. The day started with an excellent presentation from the key note speaker Dr Margot Sunderland, Director of Education and Training at The Centre for Child Mental Health in London and author of the world renowned book *What every parent needs to know* (2007). Dr Sunderland tested our assumptions about the neuroscience and psychology of baby bonding.

Dr Joyce Miller, Senior Clinical Tutor, Chiropractic Paediatrics and Alison Taylor, Senior Lecturer Midwifery then shared with the audience the chiropractic and midwifery perspective of the innovative approach to supporting the breastfeeding mother/infant pair through the newborn clinic run at AECC. The talk was ably supported by two students from the two disciplines, recounting their experience of being involved in the clinic and the unique learning opportunities it has afforded them to work in partnership with women in a real time practice environment. The interprofessional environment also offered an invaluable opportunity to work alongside different health professionals who would not normally come together.

Alison presented the final talk entitled, 'Letting off steam: video diaries to share breastfeeding experiences', which was based on the continuing analysis of her doctoral data. This was warmly received and generated a number of questions requiring health professionals to reflect on and challenge their current practice.

The final session of the day was an afternoon workshop in the style of the World Café (<http://www.theworldcafe.com>) asking the audience to come together in smaller groups to explore a number of questions that could enable a community to support women to successfully breastfeed. By listening together, debating questions that mattered and connecting diverse perspective, the workshop generated much energy, noise, laughter and understanding of each other's role.

Feedback from the day included:

'More than exceeded my expectations - such a wonderful buzz of enthusiasm, so good to be with such passionate people from different specialities lots of new information. Loved the workshop' and *'Really enjoyed the day. Excellent presentations and lots of interesting discussions. Impressed with the students giving presentations and facilitating'*.

Since the conference, the clinic is growing in size, as word gets out about its success in supporting women to breastfeed. Dissemination of preliminary findings from the clinic so far includes journal publications and conference presentations (Way & Taylor 2014, Miller *et al* 2015, Taylor *et al* 2015).

Opportunities are now being sought to secure research funding to evaluate more formally the benefits of the clinic in terms of improving sustained breastfeeding rates as well as providing a positive interprofessional learning environment for students.

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