



Creation of a Lactation-Friendly Learning Environment

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ABSTRACT:

Lactation is a normal postpartum physiological process that can continue peripartum in excess of three years and often is the sole nutritional source for infants. The process of breastfeeding not only provides infant nutrition but also facilitates maternal-infant bonding. Breastfeeding mothers separated from their infants face multiple challenges in finding and accessing appropriate spaces and allotments of time for milk expression. Maternal employment is extensively cited in literature as a great barrier to breastfeeding and accordingly has led to the creation of multiple advancements in the area of breastfeeding policy such as The Baby Friendly Initiative Ontario. This initiative has focussed on breastfeeding promotion, support, and protection, however the impact of such initiatives on lactating medical students and residents is thought to be low due to the complex, high paced medical working and learning environment where taking breaks or time off is often difficult. Additionally, The Northeast and Northwest Local Health Integration Networks alike see decreased rates of breastfeeding compared to Southern counterparts further highlighting the need for increased protection, support, and creation of safe-lactation spaces for working mothers in Northern Ontario. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) mandates that academic leaders and supervisors provide lactating learners with a reasonable break time and a private, appropriate space to express milk. Recently, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine has developed a novel lactation policy, and is one of the first medical schools in Canada to do so.

This poster will explore breastfeeding policy creation, implementation and monitoring. Development of the newly created and implemented NOSM Lactation Policy for medical learners and residents will be delineated. Future plans of action for monitoring uptake and usage of this newly created policy will be analyzed in hopes of creating a positive, breastfeeding friendly learning and working environment for NOSM medical learners and residents.