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Birth and Breastfeeding Events:
The Influence of Birth on Breastfeeding Duration –
An Exploratory Research Study.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

in

Midwifery

Massey University, Turitea, Palmerston North,
New Zealand.

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2004
Errata: a conversion error has occurred on page 54 and in Chapter 5, pages 72 – 107.
Please read $r^2$ as $\chi^2$
ABSTRACT

A retrospective exploratory methodology was used to examine the influence perinatal events had on breastfeeding duration measured at four months postpartum. A self-reporting questionnaire and examination of obstetric records provided the quantitative data for 68 normal vaginal birth women and 85 Caesarean section women.

Nonparametric Pearson’s Chi-square goodness of fit test was used to measure statistical significance. Almost 88 % (87.6%) of the respondents were breastfeeding four months following birth. This was 86.8% of normal birth women and 88.2% of Caesarean section women. Sixty-four percent of infants were exclusively breastfeeding and 11% fully breastfeeding four months after birth. Prior breastfeeding was the only event or experience found to be significantly statistically associated with type of birth and breastfeeding duration. A marginally significant statistical relationship was found between type of Caesarean section and breastfeeding at four months postpartum. Highly significant statistical relationships were identified between type of birth and: time of first cuddle, concomitant skin-to-skin contact, time of first breastfeed, supplementary feeding in hospital, and receiving help in hospital. A significant statistical relationship was identified between type of birth and having a breastfeeding problem in hospital, and a marginally significant statistical relationship between type of birth and ‘rooming in’.

Other events that were expected and identified as highly significant statistically were: multiparity and having breastfed before, having a breastfeeding problem in hospital and receiving help, type of birth and time in hospital, and breastfeeding at four months postpartum and satisfaction. There was a marginally significant statistical relationship
between breastfeeding at four months postpartum and type of caesarean section. This studies finding that there was no difference in breastfeeding rates at four months for either sub-sample of women warrants further exploration.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks go to the busy women who took the time needed to fill in my questionnaire. Your answers have been invaluable in helping me understand your experiences during birth and breastfeeding and provided insight into the impact that experience has on breastfeeding duration.

I wish to thank Kathy Manhire who helped in the development of the breastfeeding study, and was the primary scholar in developing the questionnaire and undertaking the extensive literature review that was done for the questionnaire development and the study. I also thank her for her encouragement, suggestions and scholarly support.

For giving clear guidance and help in meeting Treaty of Waitangi requirements for this study, I am sincerely grateful to Di Wepa and Jean Te Huia.

I also thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Cheryl Benn, for her understanding and interest in the area under study, her patience, support and wise guidance. Her help and support in crafting the undertaking and her feedback during the writing of the report are appreciated. I also thank Evan Jones and Art Thomas for their patient and professional guidance for the statistical analysis and support.

I specifically thank the Hawke’s Bay Ethics committee who unstintingly gave time and helpful advice regarding the ethical issues involved in undertaking this study. I also wish to acknowledge and thank Helen Christie, (Manager of Maternity Services, Hawke’s Bay District Health Board), for having the wisdom to see a way through the complex ethical issue of not harming any woman who had a change in personal or
family circumstances over the study time period, and the sensitivity to give me support during a research crisis. Without her wisdom and support this study would not have been completed.

I am grateful to Massey University Graduate Research Fund and the Eastern Institute of Technology Research Committee for their generous grants toward printing and postage and also the Faculty of Health and Sports Science for their significant support in providing me with a research scholarship. Maria McCarthy gave me invaluable and meticulous support during the patient clinical record review process and data entry stage.

I am also indebted to many other individuals at Hawke's Bay District Health Board Maternity Services who, unstintingly, gave their time and resources, in particular Mary Orchiston and Oianah Ellison, as well as all the other staff members who provided support during the patient clinical record review process.

I also give thanks to those colleagues for their generous advice, editorial support, encouragement and for gently easing my workload. In addition I thank the midwives, lactation consultants and others who helped in the development of the questionnaire.

Finally I wish to thank my husband who gave wise counselling and editorial support as well as taking over many of the household tasks during the time of the study, and Andrew, my son, who gave scholarly support in managing the reporting of the data.
This study was conceived and conducted to shed a small amount of light on women's birth and breastfeeding experiences, and has been completed in the hope that that is what has been achieved.
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