AIMS For a better birth...

ABM Conference June 2013

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My baby, Jacob, and I had a great time at the ABM conference in June 2013! I went armed with a great selection of 'Bosom Buns' and a great UKAMB cake, kindly donated by Sue Balmer and my friend and United Kingdom Association for Milk Banking (UKAMB) supporter Victoria.

There was lots of interest in the UKAMB stand, and not just in the delicious cakes (which incidentally raised £108 towards improving awareness of donor breastmilk). With most attendees being breastfeeding supporters with the ABM or other organisations, there were plenty of people wanting to ask questions and find out more about donor breastmilk banking. We were able to talk directly with those likely to be in the position of supporting donor mums, as well as parents of babies in need of donor milk. As well as being a UKAMB volunteer and Trustee, I'm also an ABM Breastfeeding Counsellor so it was doubly interesting for me.

The last conference I attended with UKAMB saw Baby Jacob just starting to crawl. That was the huge Baby Friendly conference with hundreds of attendees, and he gave me plenty to do just to keep him near our stand. This time he had just started to get up onto his feet and he decided that the room with the stands in was really designed for walking practice, so I apologise to all those women whose conversations were abruptly severed when I had suddenly to run to re-capture my small boy!

The conference itself had an amazing line up of speaker s. Gill Rapley discussed baby-led feeding of milk and solids. She explained how respecting a baby's ability to judge how much he or she wants to eat and not encouraging a baby to eat past satiation ('just one more spoon for mummy!') was likely to lead to them growing up retaining their ability to not over-eat. She talked about how babies are people too, who, if given the opportunity, will thoroughly enjoy the texture, shape, feel, colour and smell of different foods rather than having them all mushed up into one single flavour, colour and texture.

Kim Jones spoke about relactation and induced lactation, reminding us breastfeeding counsellors, mother supporters and lactation consultants that while we can explain to mums that she might 'need' to express 8-10 times in 24 hours, including overnight, we really need to work with that mum to find what actually would work for her and her family life.

Next was a fascinating update on the ISIS infant sleep project, and we were all immensely impressed that, despite the speaker being unwell and therefore unable to attend, ABM set up a Skype link to her colleague who presented the talk on projection screens via the Internet! The ISIS project

(www.isisonline.org.uk) has been hugely important in supporting parents in making informed choices about the option of safe bed-sharing, and how it can support breastfeeding, which itself reduces the risk of SIDS.

Mike Brady of Baby Milk Action (www.babymilkaction.org), as always, spoke passionately about the ways that artificial baby milk advertising undermines breastfeeding, breaks the WHO Code and sometimes breaks UK law. He shared our frustration that companies whose adverts were found to be illegal, such as the recent *What's the best milk after Lisa's?* campaign, do not have to advertise a retraction; they just have to stop the adverts which will be several months into their release, and from the public's point of view the advert simply seems to have run its course.

The final speaker was the wonderful Kate Evans, cartoonist and author of the utterly fabulous book,*The Food of Love.* This book is a wonderful introduction to breastfeeding and normal baby behaviour, illustrated by Kate's funny, inspiring and informative cartoons. Kate's talk was on feminism and breastfeeding, and how the two are actually eminently compatible. Being a feminist does not mean that we can't cherish our femininity and our unique ability to nourish a child at the breast.

In all, it was a superb conference, with great speakers, very professionally managed and an exceptional lunch to boot! A very valuable conference for UKAMB, and a very enjoyable and informative day for me.

Thank you ABM!

Emma Ashworth

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