AIMS For a better birth...

Editorial: The Politics of Infant Feeding

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By Journal Editor Emma Ashworth



For me, like so many breastfeeding supporters, there was a turning point that I can look back on with absolute clarity as the point where breastfeeding stopped being just a thing that I did, and became a passion. I read "The Politics of Breastfeeding" when I had already breastfed one baby and was pregnant with my second. I'd assumed that breastfeeding him would be as easy as my first, however it was anything but. Through the months of trial by tongue tie, cow's milk protein intolerance and the severe reflux that they both brought to our family, it was Gabrielle Palmer's book which was the key to me having the determination to stay the course (together with amazing support from wonderful breastfeeding counsellors).

The publisher states, "As revealing as "Freakonomics", shocking as "Fast Food Nation" and thought provoking as "No Logo", *The Politics of Breastfeeding* exposes infant feeding as one of the most important

public health issues of our time." The extensive evidence base on the importance to the health of women and babies of breastfeeding is immense, despite the doubters who, like climate change deniers, attempt to undermine the facts with rhetoric and misrepresentation. Despite being published 10 years ago, it is as relevant today as it ever was, and Palmer's new book, "Why The Politics of Breastfeeding Matters" explains why these issues still need to be at the forefront of public awareness and Governmental support.

Of equal importance is the right of all people to decide what to do with their own bodies, and supporting everyone to make decisions which are right for them is at the core of AIMS' work. To be able to make decisions, we need evidence based information and therefore we are all indebted to Gillian Weaver and her colleagues at the Hearts Milk Bank for their research into breastmilk, as well as her many years of service to babies and families who need access to breastmilk which isn't their mother's own. In this edition of the AIMS Journal, Gillian shares with us an update on the Hearts Milk Bank, which is revolutionising the concept of donor milk banking.

Despite the dangers to public health of removing support for breastfeeding, the ongoing reduction in funding for these services continues. But not everyone is taking this lying down. Ayala Ochert inspires us all with The Better Breastfeeding Campaign" that she is working with, which helps local campaigners to protect or reinstate experienced and committed breastfeeding teams around the country.Her article is an essential read for anyone who is facing the issue of the loss of their local breastfeeding services.

The history of formula gives a fascinating insight into how the wants of business and the desire to find a market for a glut of milk overtook the needs, health and, in some cases, lives, of women and babies. Packaging which blatantly advertised its milk product as a baby food while also having, as a legal necessity, the phrase "not suitable for infants" in tiny writing, underlines the way that marketing of breastmilk substitutes continues right up to today.A history of the Nestle boycott by Marta Busquets is followed by an update on the current situation by Patti Rundall of Baby Milk Action.

The need for excellent support for all women who want to breastfeed is brought to life in the moving and insightful article by Philippa Lomas. Philippa's experience of hypoplasia – sometimes known as "insufficient glandular tissue" – shows how expert, experienced and trained people are needed to pick up on more complex, less common issues.

As always in the AIMS Journal, as well as the on-topic articles we have gathered updates from around the birth world to inspire and support those of you who work so hard to improve the UK's maternity services. This edition looks at the dire situation with the York homebirth service, gives AIMS' response to the Professional Standards Agency's (PSA) report on the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) a report on the Maternity Unit Network (MUNet) Conference and some good news from Hungarian midwife and obstetrician Agnes Gereb. We welcome an introduction from The Association of Breastfeeding Mothers (ABM) in our section dedicated to collaborative working by sharing what other maternity organisations are focusing on, and we have a lovely homebirth story of baby Iris by Claire Pottage.

Finally, many thanks to Sarah Kidson, Maddie McMahon and Jo Dagustun for three new book reviews for our collection

.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of the AIMS Journal. As always, we welcome feedback, suggestions for Journal topics and most importantly writers! If you have written something that you would like to see published in the Journal (which hasn't been published elsewhere) then please do get in touch – journal@aims.org.uk.