



Ontario Public Health Association

l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario

Established/Établi 1949

700 Lawrence Ave. W., Suite 310
Toronto, Ontario M6A 3B4

Tel: (416) 367-3313
1-800-267-6817 (Ont)
Fax: (416) 367-2844
E-mail: info@opha.on.ca
www.opha.on.ca

Honorary Patron

The Hon. James K. Bartleman
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

President

Dr. Garry Aslanyan
E-mail: gaslanyan@opha.on.ca

Interim Executive Director

Connie Uetrecht
E-mail: cuetrecht@opha.on.ca

Constituent Societies

ANDSOOHA – Public Health Nursing
Management in Ontario

Association of Ontario
Health Centres

Association of Public Health
Epidemiologists in Ontario

Association of Supervisors of Public
Health Inspectors of Ontario

Canadian Institute of Public Health
Inspectors (Ontario Branch)

Community Health Nurses' Initiatives
Group (RNAO)

Health Promotion Ontario:
Public Health

Ontario Association of Public Health
Dentistry

Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals
in Public Health

Public Health Research, Education and
Development (PHRED) Program

Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

The mission of OPHA is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health and to strengthen the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario.

November 16, 2006

Chatelaine Last Word
One Mount Pleasant Road, 8th Floor
Toronto, ON M4Y 2Y5

Dear Editor:

On behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) and its Breastfeeding Promotion Workgroup (see below for more information), we would like to thank Katrina Onstad for her recent article about the difficulties she encountered with breastfeeding (*Breastfeeding Sucks*, November 2006). Ms. Onstad has identified three extremely important issues that may be unfamiliar to your readers.

To begin, some women experience breastfeeding problems, particularly in the early days, which can be challenging both emotionally and physically. Women who experience such challenges often feel unprepared to deal with them, as the messages we often hear are related only to the benefits of breastfeeding.

Second, many people do not know that some babies can have a poor latch at the breast, and still receive enough milk to allow them to grow normally. If the mother has an ample milk supply, a baby who is incorrectly latched may remove enough milk from the breast to meet his or her needs, but the poor latch may cause great pain to the mother.

Finally, many supporters of breastfeeding may not know how to correct an improper latch, or even know how to identify the problem. They may be able to recognize by the mother's pain that something is wrong, but not know what to do about it.

Pregnant women and their supports need to be offered opportunities to learn all about breastfeeding *prenatally*, including how to prevent problems. It is also important for families to have health professionals assist them in identifying and addressing their potential barriers to breastfeeding, before the baby arrives. Families need to know how to access the support they need after the baby is born, in order to ensure a successful and rewarding breastfeeding experience.

It is widely acknowledged that there needs to be better breastfeeding education for health care providers. Families are entitled to expect a certain standard of care from all health professionals, and that includes prenatal educators, midwives, family physicians, obstetricians, pediatricians and both hospital and community nurses. The ***Baby-Friendly™ Initiative*** aims to deliver that standard by making certain that parents receive consistent, accurate, and timely breastfeeding information and support. For more information on the *Baby-Friendly™ Initiative*, visit www.breastfeedingcanada.ca.

To find out about the breastfeeding education opportunities and sources of support in your community, please contact your local public health unit/agency. Access to more breastfeeding resources in the community may well have helped prevent this mother's negative breastfeeding experience.

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) represents the interests of more than 3,000 community and public health practitioners across Ontario. The mission of OPHA is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health and to strengthen the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario. The Breastfeeding Promotion Workgroup of the OPHA focuses on the promotion, support and advocacy for breastfeeding.

Sincerely,

Dr. Garry Aslanyan
President