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### **A Descriptive Study of Neonatal Nurses' Perceptions, Knowledge, and Practice on Support of Breastfeeding in the NICU.**

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**Source:** Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, PA.

#### **Abstract**

The purpose of this descriptive, correlational study was to examine the knowledge, practice, and perceptions of neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) nurses regarding breastfeeding. Respondents completed a 34-item investigator generated survey. The survey utilized a 4 point Likert scale to measure views in each of three domains: knowledge, practice, and perception of breastfeeding. Additionally, nurses were asked to share their views on whether there was adequate support for breastfeeding mothers. Sixty-eight NICU nurses completed the survey. Only 32.4percent of nurses reported completing formal breastfeeding training. The majority of nurses (58.8 percent) felt that their views/perceptions of breastfeeding were "highly" influenced by their knowledge/education. Knowledge scores were moderately above average; however, practice and perception mean scores were minimally above average. There was a direct association between nurses' perceptions and knowledge of breast feeding (p<.01). Fifty-four percent of nurses felt there was inadequate support in the NICU for breastfeeding mothers, thus identifying three opportunities for improvement. The areas to be addressed were: 1) the lack of lactation resource people/support, 2) inconsistent information given to mothers, and 3) a lack of time available to spend with breastfeeding mother-infant dyads. This study implies that knowledge and/or perceptions of breastfeeding, albeit positive or negative, do not necessarily affect practice. Future exploration should be aimed at strategies to remove barriers and provide consistency in breastfeeding support.

<http://neonatalnetwork.metapress.com/content/gg702635410g2290/?p=c8abfc3200f04a72b96d7ba10dcbc75c&pi=11>