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Georgia Southern Examines Increasing Breastfeeding Duration and Exclusivity in Rural Women

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Background: Increasing breastfeeding exclusivity and duration is an objective of Maternal and Child Health (MICH-21.4 and 21.5) of the Healthy People 2020 initiative. Breastfeeding rates differ considerably between high-income and low-income women.

This was a pilot project conducted to assess the feasibility of an intervention to increase breastfeeding practices overall and to improve exclusive breastfeeding rates among a sample of rural women enrolled in the Special, Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) in a rural Georgia county. Participants were recruited from the local regional hospital (n=27). Support group meetings were offered over a four-week period and began within five days of birth. At each meeting, data were gathered on demographic characteristics, pacifier use, initiation of cup feeding, and rates of breastfeeding duration and exclusivity.

Low-income women continue to be among the most challenging group in which to improve breastfeeding duration and exclusivity rates. Public health programs need to create innovative ways in which to improve breastfeeding rates. Lessons learned from the pilot study are described and suggestions for future study are provided.

“Increasing breastfeeding duration and exclusivity in a sample of rural women: A pilot study” was published in the Journal of the Georgia Public Health Association.

Dr. Joanne Chopak-Foss, Associate Professor of Community Health at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health was the lead author and Ms. Felicia Yeboah, second year DrPH of Epidemiology student was the co-author.

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