

Breastfeeding Promotion

I am sure that the sociologists have analysed any complex reasons why breastfeeding is not the norm in Australia and why enthusiasts and helpers are so quickly vilified as "breastfeeding Nazis". I believe a positive media blitz could do much to make it the norm. Things to consider:

Positive articles and ads in the glossy magazines aimed at young women.

Whimsical ads or articles in the mens magazines. Men love tits so they can get pictures of nice lactating ones. Give them cartoons. Tell them that shitty nappies from breastmilk don't smell as bad as formula fed shit! Australian Breastfeeding Association has a Dads project being planned and I am sure they have masses of relevant material. Dads need to be reminded that there is plenty they can do, but they need to leave the feeding to their woman – I have even heard the spurious argument that bottles are better because the men can share!

I think that men need a gentle nudge to allow their attitude to tweak slightly, and then they become enthusiastic supporters. It is a long time since I suckled my young, but I have not forgotten the admiring glances I got when feeding in public - glances so subtly different from the conventional perve!

Celebrity breastfeeders getting publicity in the media. People need to be heard joyfully talking about feeding.

A photographic competition with celebrities, ordinary families, sportspeople all with babes at the breast (I think a Sydney Herald photographer got an award a few years ago for a pic of one of the big Kiwi rugby girls feeding at half-time)

Publicity about breastfeeding-friendly workplaces, as well as the whole topic of breastfeeding and work-outside-the-home. (Of course it is possible)

Some controversy, like a trumped up ban on formula bottles in a cinema.

I continue to be disturbed about the sad phenomenon of positive health messages missing the most disadvantaged families. Any promotion needs to pick the brains of experts who have studied this and come up with some solutions.

In my paid work over the last forty years I have been privileged to get to know many families in each "wave" of new immigrants. But each time, and now with the Sudanese people, it has been sad to see mothers apparently regarding the bottle as a sign of being Australian. So migrant groups need to be especially targeted.

It is hard to believe that infant welfare staff are given free samples of artificial feeding products. I thought that went out with the WHO regulations in the late 70s. The formula industry needs to be seen as comparable to the tobacco industry. The fight may have to be as big, but what wonderful publicity.

Promotion is going to cost a lot of money, but it has to happen. I hope that any campaign will be channeled through Australian Breastfeeding Association and the midwives group. They have the networks and the know-how. They need lots of

money for promotion. I look forward to seeing a huge billboard depicting a beautiful woman with a breast exposed to her beautiful baby.