

Breastfeeding and Intelligence Not Demonstrated

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Send response to journal:
Re: Breastfeeding and Intelligence Not Demonstrated

The article on Breastfeeding and IQ in the BMJ was read with much interest, however, the duration of breastfeeding is far too short to expect any significant effect on intelligence, as claimed. The authors report "that the median duration of breastfeeding is three months and the 95th percentile is 14 months". This duration of breastfeeding is far too short to test the hypothesis that there is a link between breastfeeding and IQ.

There is increasing evidence that the long term health benefits of breastfeeding is to be found in the emotional-social-sexual domain rather than in the IQ domain and it takes breastfeeding bonding for 2.5 years to optimize brain-behavioral development to realize these emotional-social-sexual developmental effects.

The studies by this author on 26 tribal cultures with weaning age of 2.5 years or greater have documented that 77% of these cultures are rated low or absent in depression/suicide; and that a statistically significant difference exists in rated suicides between cultures with WA of 2.0 years or less v 2.5 years or greater indicating a formative period of brain development that would account for these effects. There are, of course, no tribal cultures that do not breastfeed. It takes a particular kind of culture that supports a mother breastfeeding for 2.5 years or longer

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See

<http://www.violence.de/prescott/politics-trust.pdf>
<http://violence.de/prescott/ttf/cultbrain.pdf>

<http://www.violence.de/prescott/ttf/article.html>;

Clearly, this kind of data on breastfeeding for "two years of age and beyond", as recommended by WHO and UNICEF (Innocenti Declaration, 1990), does not exist in any of the national registers on breastfeeding, unless the authors have information to the contrary. Only 2.7 percent of American mothers are breastfeeding at two years of life and only 1.0 percent at 2.5 years of life. (NHANES 111,1988--94) (Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey). (Hedeger, 2001).

The effects of extended breastfeeding on reducing breast cancer was reported by Zheng, et al (2000). They report:

"For women who breastfed for more than 24 months per child, the odds ratio was 0.46 (95% confidence interval (CI): 0.27, 0.78) when compared with those who breastfed for 1–6 months per child. A significantly reduced risk of breast cancer was also found for those whose lifetime duration of lactation totaled 73–108 months (odds ratio = 0.47, 95% CI: 0.23, 0.95) and for those who breastfed for 109 months (odds ratio = 0.24, 95% CI: 0.11, 0.53)".

It is time that modern neurodiagnostic tools of MRI, fMRI, PET scans and other modern quantitative methods of brain evaluation be employed to assess differences in brain structure and function in young adults who have been breastfed for "two years and beyond" v non-breastfed controls. There is an equal need to record the weaning age of every child and make it a part of the immunological record and a nation's vital statistics record. There is an urgent need to establish a new international growth record that includes parameters of brain development and function, as they are not now a part of the breastfeeding record to evaluate the nutritional effectiveness of infant formula milk (WHO, 2001). <http://www.who.int/inf-pr-2001/en/note2001-07.html>.,

The psychobiology of breastfeeding takes time that is not recognized by modern human cultures and that it takes a particular kind of culture to support mothers breastfeeding for "two years of age and beyond". The modern human culture has lost its cultural heritage and is not one of these cultures.

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Tongzhang Zheng, Li Duan, Yi Liu, Bing Zhang, Yan Wang, Yongxiang Chen, Yawei Zhang and Patricia H. Owens (2000). Lactation Reduces Breast Cancer Risk in Shandong Province, China. American Journal of Epidemiology Vol. 152, No. 12 : 1129-1135

WHO/UNICEF. (1990) Innocenti Declaration: On the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding. Florence, Italy--1 August

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Competing interests: None declared

Rapid Responses to:

Geoff Der, G David Batty, and Ian J Deary (2006) Effect of breast feeding on intelligence in children: prospective study, sibling pairs analysis, and meta-analysis
BMJ 2006; 0: [bmj.38978.699583.55v1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.38978.699583.55v1) [Abstract] October 4, 2006.