38% of child bearing women with HIV in the UK would like to breastfeed

PACIFY STUDY

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Background

- Breastfeeding is accepted as vital strategy due to its numerous benefits to the infant and the mother.
- WHO advises women in resource limited settings, who are adhering to ART, to exclusively breastfeed for the first 6 months of the infant’s life and continue supplemental breastfeeding for at least 12 months, and even up to 2 years or beyond.
Background

• PROMISE data reports a transmission rate of <1% at 12 months in infants breast fed by mothers on suppressive ART\(^1\)

• In resource rich settings avoidance of breast feeding is still advised

• We explored the views of childbearing women with HIV in the UK around breast feeding
Methods

• The study group devised a six paged anonymised questionnaire which had ethical approval
• This was offered to women living with HIV in the third trimester of pregnancy or within 3 months post-partum
• Women were recruited from 12 UK clinics from June 2017–June 2018
Results

• 94 women responded to our questionnaire
• 69% of participants were Black African and median age 36 years (range 20-44)
• 92% had an undetectable HIV viral load, 1% had a HIV viral load of 268 copies/ml and 7% no data available
• Median CD4 count was 618 cells/mm$^3$
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No answer</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think it’s safe for women with detectable HIV in the blood (whether on or off treatment) to breastfeed?</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think it’s safe for women on treatment with fully suppressed HIV (&quot;asleep&quot;) in the blood to breastfeed?</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you were to breast feed, would you be willing to have monthly blood tests to check your viral load stays undetectable (asleep)?</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you were to breast feed, would you be willing for your baby to have a monthly blood test to make sure she/he does not get HIV?</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have any concerns about breast feeding whilst you are taking anti-HIV medicines?</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you heard of “exclusive breast feeding”?</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Table of results</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have any healthcare workers discussed breast feeding with you?</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like more information on the benefits and disadvantages of breastfeeding for women with HIV?</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever had to lie about your reasons for not breast feeding?</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have any friends, family or members of your community ever questioned you about your reasons for not breast feeding?</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with HIV, would you like to breast feed your child?</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

• 38% of participants said they would like to breastfeed their baby
• Stigma and secrecy was an issue for women
• It may be time to consider a more open dialogue with women about breastfeeding and optimise ways to support those that choose to do so
Thank you

- Jessica and Thomas Gubbin- Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
- Paula Seery- Chelsea and Westminster NHS Foundation Trust
- Pippa Farrugia- Guys and St Thomas Hospital NHS Trust
- Adam Croucher- Homerton University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Yvonne Gileece-Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Melanie Rosenvinge- Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust
- Sherie Roedling-Central and Northwest London NHS Trust
- Liat Sarner- Barts Health NHS Trust
- Daya Nayagam- Kings College Healthcare NHS Trust
- Clare Stradling- University Hospitals of Birmingham NHS Trust
- Angeline Namiba-Salmandest Trust
- Siobhan Murphy-London Northwest Healthcare NHS Trust
- Nicola Fearnley-Bradford University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Hermione Lyall-Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
References