



REVIEW ARTICLE

# Impact of health professional training in breastfeeding on their knowledge, skills, and hospital practices: a systematic review<sup>☆</sup>



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## KEYWORDS

Breast feeding;  
Health professional;  
Training;  
Knowledge;  
Professional practice;  
Baby-Friendly  
Hospital Initiative

## Abstract

**Objective:** To identify the impact of training in breastfeeding on knowledge, skills, and professional and hospital practices.

**Data source:** The systematic review search was carried out through the MEDLINE, Scopus, and LILACS databases. Reviews, studies with qualitative methodology, those without control group, those conducted in primary care, with specific populations, studies that had a belief and/or professional attitude as outcome, or those with focus on the post-discharge period were excluded. There was no limitation of period or language. The quality of the studies was assessed by the adapted criteria of Downs and Black.

**Summary of data:** The literature search identified 276 articles, of which 37 were selected for reading, 26 were excluded, and six were included through reference search. In total, 17 intervention articles were included, three of them with good internal validity. The studies were performed between 1992 and 2010 in countries from five continents; four of them were conducted in Brazil. The training target populations were nursing practitioners, doctors, midwives, and home visitors. Many kinds of training courses were applied. Five interventions employed the theoretical and practical training of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative. All kinds of training courses showed at least one positive result on knowledge, skills, and/or professional/hospital practices, most of them with statistical significance.

**Conclusions:** Training of hospital health professionals has been effective in improving knowledge, skills, and practices.

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**PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Aleitamento materno;  
 Profissional de saúde;  
 Capacitação;  
 Conhecimento;  
 Prática profissional;  
 Iniciativa Hospital  
 Amigo da Criança

## Repercussão da capacitação de profissionais de saúde em aleitamento materno sobre seus conhecimentos, habilidades e práticas hospitalares: uma revisão sistemática

**Resumo**

**Objetivo:** Identificar a repercussão da capacitação em aleitamento materno sobre conhecimentos, habilidades e práticas profissionais e hospitalares.

**Fontes dos dados:** A busca da revisão sistemática foi efetuada nas bases MedLine, Scopus e Lilacs. Foram excluídos artigos de revisão, de metodologia qualitativa, estudos sem grupo controle, conduzidos na atenção primária, com clientela específica, cujos desfechos eram crença e/ou atitude profissional e trabalhos com foco no período pós-alta hospitalar. Não houve limitação quanto ao ano ou idioma, sendo realizada avaliação da qualidade dos artigos por critério adaptado de Downs & Black.

**Síntese dos dados:** Na busca de literatura foram encontrados 276 artigos e selecionados 37 para leitura integral, sendo excluídos 26 artigos e incluídos 6 mediante busca das referências. Foram incluídos 17 artigos de intervenção e três apresentaram boa validade interna. Os estudos foram conduzidos entre 1992 e 2010 em países de cinco continentes, sendo quatro no Brasil. O principal público-alvo das capacitações foram profissionais de enfermagem, médicos, parteiras e visitantes domiciliares. Os cursos de capacitação foram diversos, cinco intervenções empregando o treinamento teórico-prático da Iniciativa Hospital Amigo da Criança. Todas as formas de capacitação apresentaram algum resultado positivo sobre os conhecimentos, habilidades e/ou práticas profissionais e hospitalares, a maioria com significância estatística.

**Conclusões:** As capacitações de profissionais de saúde que atuam em hospitais têm sido efetivas em aprimorar conhecimentos, habilidades e práticas.

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**Introduction**

The World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>1</sup> and the Brazilian Ministry of Health<sup>2</sup> recommend exclusive breastfeeding for six months and breastfeeding supplemented with other foods until 2 years of age or more.

However, health professionals' lack of knowledge and skills on breastfeeding and unfavorable attitudes toward this practice<sup>3</sup> can negatively influence the establishment and maintenance of breastfeeding,<sup>4</sup> with lack of training representing one of the causes for the inefficiency of professional practice.<sup>5</sup> The health professional's role is to reinterpret the scientific discourse with the clientele.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is essential to have knowledge and clinical skills in breastfeeding counseling, to be able to guide and assist in breastfeeding management, when necessary.<sup>7,8</sup>

Several studies show the need for specific and periodic training in promoting, protecting, and supporting breastfeeding, aiding in the encouragement and support of breastfeeding policies and protocols in health institutions.<sup>7-9</sup>

High staff turnover – as well as lack of motivation, available resources, and time – are factors that hinder the training of the health care team.<sup>10</sup>

A review by Fairbank et al.<sup>11</sup> on the effectiveness of professional training to promote the onset of breastfeeding found increased knowledge of the staff, but did not identify statistically significant changes regarding the onset of breastfeeding. Another review<sup>12</sup> of interventions with professionals, with the duration of breastfeeding as the outcome, concluded that the evidence was still insufficient and

recommended that studies report intermediate outcomes of interventions, such as professional knowledge and practices.

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) is a strategy that starts with awareness, training, and mobilization of health care professionals working in hospitals with obstetric beds, aiming to establish rules and routines favorable to the practice of breastfeeding. It was launched in 1990 by the WHO and The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) during a meeting where the Declaration of Innocenti was signed.<sup>13</sup> At this meeting, global goals were proposed and the "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding" were established.<sup>13</sup>

Step 2 of the BFHI refers to the training of staff to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to implement the hospital norms and routines in breastfeeding and, thus, the BFHI course is both theoretical and practical.<sup>14</sup>

No reviews were found that focused on the influence of health professionals' training in breastfeeding on their knowledge and practices. Considering the importance of professional training to improve hospital practices aiming to increase breastfeeding rates, the objective of this systematic review was to highlight the impact of training interventions on breastfeeding in health professionals working in hospitals regarding their professional knowledge, skills, and practices, as well as hospital practices.

**Methods**

A systematic review of the scientific literature was conducted through the Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval

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