

## ABM News Article Volume 4 (1) March 2009

### **ABM is leading the Global “Physicians’ Initiative” for the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) and influencing Global Policy**

Did you know that ABM is a Core Partner of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)? What should that mean for ABM members? What does it mean for others, including physicians and non-physicians worldwide?

While WABA may be best known for the World Breastfeeding Week (WBW), celebrated in August, the organization’s mission goes far beyond that annual event. (News Flash! the issue to be highlighted in WBW 2009 will be breastfeeding in emergencies)

WABA is a global network of organizations and individuals who, like ABM and its members, are committed to the principles set forth in the Innocenti Declaration of 1990: “Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding” worldwide, affirmed and expanded in the subsequent Innocenti Declaration of 2005. Also in 2005, WABA invited ABM to become its physician arm, to develop and lead the WABA Physicians’ Initiative, and to serve as one of WABA’s ‘Core Partners.’ The Core Partners play a central role in support of WABA’s goals and initiatives, and provide the primary inputs for decision-making by the WABA Steering Committee. In addition, at the time of this writing, at least three ABM members are serving on the Steering Committee and related leadership roles.

So what does this all mean to ABM as an international organization, and to each of us as members?

Beyond working locally and/or globally on World Breastfeeding Week, the individual ABM physician can support global support for breastfeeding and support WABA by:

- Completing the WABA Endorsement Form stating that you support the goals mentioned above. This endorsement form is available on line:  
<http://www.waba.org.my/docs/WABA%20Endorsement%20Form.doc>
- Signing the WABA Physician’s Pledge, modified by ABM to support all of the Innocenti goals. The Physician’s Pledge is available here. Please fax your signed Physician’s Pledge to ABM at its USA headquarters, 914-740-2101, or mailed to:

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine  
140 Huguenot Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor,  
New Rochelle, New York 10801  
USA

As an organization, ABM supports WABA in several ways. We post information about WABA and links to WABA on our website, provide WABA with a subscription to our journal, and have several regional representatives attend WABA meetings. ABM’s journal, *Breastfeeding Medicine*, is available free on-line in many libraries in developing countries, and WABA will disseminate these points of contact as they become available to inform physicians in developing countries how and where they can access the journal online.

WABA in turn disseminates information about ABM to all its readers and to physician endorsers, sponsors ABM annual membership for 10 physicians from least developed countries, and has welcomed a direct liaison from ABM as well as regional ABM representatives to its annual meetings.

One important role of the ABM liaison to WABA is to participate in global policy development. In September 2008, ABM participation in a WABA workshop on “Breastfeeding during Months 6-24 Plus” led to the development of a letter that was sent to UNICEF and World Health Organization (WHO/OMS) during a concurrent WHO meeting on this topic area. The letter spells out the need to develop definitions and indicators for breastfeeding at 6-24+ months. The urgency for this letter resulted from the dissemination by the WHO/OMS/UNICEF/USAID of intensive guidance and indicators for striving for a considerable quantity of complementary foods, with little attention to the issue of maintaining adequate levels of breastfeeding. (For more information, see [http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/complementary\\_feeding/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/complementary_feeding/en/index.html) and [http://www.fantaproject.org/publications/iycf\\_definitions2008.shtml](http://www.fantaproject.org/publications/iycf_definitions2008.shtml).)

The WABA workshop letter, endorsed by the 53 participants from 24 countries, was distributed and well received at the concurrent WHO meeting. ABM members were major contributors to the development of this letter, which calls for WHO attention to indicators, global goals, and recommendations for basic guidance to mothers on adequate breastfeeding for children of this age. In addition, draft definitions for minimal and optimal breastfeeding for months 6-24 and beyond were developed and will be included in the proceedings. Complete proceedings and detailed suggestions on this issue will be posted on the WABA and ABM websites. The workshop also honored Professor Michael Latham, MD, for his contribution to infant and young child nutrition.