

Physician's Pledge to Promote, Protect and Support Breastfeeding

RECOGNIZING THAT breastfeeding plays an uniquely important role in health, development and survival of infants and young children and their mothers;

...optimally, breastfeeding is initiated within the immediate postpartum period with skin-to-skin placement, practised exclusively for 6 months, and continued for up to 2 years or more with appropriate complementary feeding;

...no substitute can provide the complex and dynamic balance of nutrients, antibodies, growth factors and living cells that make human milk the perfect food for human infants;

...women have the right to make their infant feeding decision based on complete and accurate information, and deserve to receive the skilled support of the medical community in achieving optimal breastfeeding;

...breastfeeding is an endangered natural resource that is needed to overcome the immune deficiencies of infancy and that requires my protection and support, and to provide adequate support, my skills must be maintained and up-to-date;

...my role as a physician is one of influence, authority, and trust, and that I wish above all else, to do no harm;

...the targets of the Innocenti Declarations are important to breastfeeding protection, promotion and support, and should be integrated into in my work and in my spheres of influence;

...both maternal and infant care, including medical intervention during pregnancy and L&D, should be carried out with consideration of the potential impact on breastfeeding;

...data on infant feeding practices must be part of normal health data collection and be monitored accordingly;

...current marketing practices – including free or low-cost distribution of human milk substitute supplies to hospitals or any other part of the health care system – create misunderstanding and asymmetry of information, and bias health workers and mothers concerning infant feeding choices;

...my government affirmed at the World Health Assembly in 1994 that the marketing and promotion of breast-milk substitutes should not be conducted anywhere in the health care system or by health care workers, and to promote, support and protect breastfeeding must be taken *with urgency*; and,

...the promotion of health and prevention of morbidity and mortality are the duties and mandate of the responsible health care providers everywhere:

I, _____,

hereby pledge to do my part to promote, protect and support optimal breastfeeding, to ensure that training of future physicians includes all evidence-based and necessary knowledge and skills, to provide leadership for the breastfeeding support team, and to work towards the four Innocenti Goals: to create multi-sectoral leadership, to ensure that facilities follow the Ten Steps, to support the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and end free or low-cost distribution of breastmilk substitutes in our health care systems, and to support paid maternity leave and workplace accommodation for breastfeeding mothers.

