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Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine

### For Immediate Release

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## Undeniable Benefits of Breastfeeding— Support for Evidence-Based International Guidelines

*New Rochelle, NY, January 20, 2011* —A recent challenge to the well-established World Health Organization (WHO) breastfeeding guidelines is not supported by current research findings and unnecessarily questions the clear benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for at least the first 6 months of life. The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM), a global physicians' organization, supports the 2001 WHO recommendation for exclusive breastfeeding (not supplemented by formula or solid food) for six months after birth and emphasizes the proven health benefits of breastfeeding for both infants and mothers. ABM cautions against unsubstantiated, contradictory messages that create unnecessary confusion.

Ruth A. Lawrence, MD, Department of Pediatrics, University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, a founder of ABM, and Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Breastfeeding Medicine*, challenges the opinions expressed by authors Mary Fewtrell and colleagues in the December 2010 issue of the *British Medical Journal*. The UK authors propose revisiting the WHO guidelines and contend that exclusive breastfeeding increases the risk for anemia, celiac disease, food allergies, and dislike of strong-tasting foods.

The UK authors do not accurately represent and interpret the currently available data on breastfeeding, according to Miriam Labbok, MD, MPH, Department of Maternal and Child Health, University of North Carolina and Director, Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute. Anemia can be substantially reduced at birth "by delayed clamping of the umbilical cord. The research on food allergies remains controversial, and other studies have shown that breastfed infants are already exposed to the flavors of foods ingested by the mother."

Further calling into question the motivation and basis for the views expressed by Fewtrell, et al. is the recent work by several of the authors as consultants for and recipients of funding from companies that produce infant formula and baby food.

The [Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine](#) is a global organization of physicians dedicated to the promotion, protection, and support of breastfeeding through education, research, and advocacy. It promotes the development and dissemination of clinical practice guidelines. The **Academy** has prepared clinical protocols for the care of breastfeeding mothers and infants that are available on

the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) National Guidelines Clearinghouse website.

***Breastfeeding Medicine***, the official journal of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, is an authoritative, peer-reviewed, multidisciplinary journal published bimonthly in print and online by [Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.](#) The Journal publishes original scientific articles, reviews, and case studies on a broad spectrum of topics in lactation medicine. It presents evidence-based research advances and explores the immediate and long-term outcomes of breastfeeding, including the epidemiologic, physiologic, and psychological benefits of breastfeeding. Tables of contents and a free sample issue are available at [www.liebertpub.com/bfm](http://www.liebertpub.com/bfm)

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