Disparities in the Provision of Breast Milk for Very Low Birth Weight Infants in Rural Eastern North Carolina

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Introduction

• Breastmilk is the optimal source of nutrition of very low birth weight (VLBW) infants
• Breastfeeding participation rates vary based on sociodemographic status and race
• Women of color are disproportionately affected by adverse health outcomes that improve with breastfeeding such as metabolic syndrome (obesity, hypertension and insulin resistance), decreased risk for breast and ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and osteoporosis
Methods

• Prospectively identification of English-speaking mothers of infants born VLBW (<1500g) admitted in the Vidant Medical Center NICU and Special Care Nursery from October 2018 to January 2020

• Mothers’ responses were recorded at the bedside to a written survey regarding delivery, health history, feeding preferences, breast pumps, challenges and barriers to providing breast milk, formula feeding, and demographics

Figure 1: Participant flowchart
Results

Figure 2: Social Characteristics (%)

Figure 3: Feeding Characteristics (%)

Legend:
- White Mothers
- Mothers of Color
Discussion

• Our study population was predominantly African American, WIC eligible, single mothers who were less likely to have been breastfed by their own mothers.

• Most mothers of color expressed the desire to breastfeed and to continue breastfeeding.

• Mothers of color were less likely to perceive that they have an adequate breast milk supply for their VLBW infants.
Conclusion

• Social determinants in our community may drive the family support and experience of breastfeeding mothers of color and the focus of future studies and interventions should specifically address this population

• Further efforts are needed to increase breastfeeding rates of mothers of color