

Title: Strengthening Human Milk Banking Systems Through an Integrated Approach

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Abstract

Issues: A prerequisite for ensuring infants' right to a safe, high-quality, and sustainable supply of donor human milk is an effective and integrated human milk bank system. The provision of donor human milk has been shown to significantly reduce morbidity and mortality of vulnerable infants and is recommended as the next best option when a mother's own milk is unavailable. Scale-up of human milk banks has been hindered, however, by the absence of an appropriate model for resource-limited settings and a lack of policy support for human milk banks and operational procedures.

Description Using current guidelines from human milk banks around the world, and highlighting best practices, this research offers a set of universal requirements as a model for increasing the effectiveness of human milk banks, particularly in low-resource settings. When human milk banks are supported by national and regional policies and guidelines in a comprehensive push to prioritize breastfeeding promotion, they can serve as an integral component of a community breastfeeding program.

Lessons Learned: The key components of an integrated human milk bank system are laid on a foundation of four self-reinforcing systems including: (1) a base for quality assurance; (2) advocacy for breastfeeding support; (3) networking for auditing, tracking, sharing strategies, and building partnerships; and (4) key protocols to provide guidance for the clinical provision of donor human milk.

Recommendations: An effective and comprehensive approach for establishing a human milk bank system that is integrated with existing newborn care guidelines, neonatal units, breastfeeding support services, and national and regional policies can help current and future human milk banks to reach greater potential.