

Empowering Breastfeeding Success: Comparing Nurse-led and Lactation Consultant-led Education at Six Weeks Postpartum

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This evidence-based practice (EBP) project explored the impact of nurse-led versus lactation consultant-led breastfeeding education on breastfeeding duration at six weeks postpartum. Findings support the use of International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) to improve maternal self-efficacy, motivation, and breastfeeding outcomes.

Background and Significance

Breastfeeding promotes long-term health benefits for both infants and mothers, but successful breastfeeding often requires expert support. Many new mothers discontinue breastfeeding early due to latch issues, nipple pain, or low confidence. This project addressed whether nurse-led breastfeeding education is as effective as IBCLC-led support in extending breastfeeding duration to six weeks postpartum.

Evidence and Methods

Eleven U.S.-based studies (published since 2019) were analyzed. Key themes included maternal self-efficacy, postpartum support models, and duration of breastfeeding. Studies consistently found that IBCLC-led interventions resulted in higher self-efficacy and prolonged breastfeeding durations, particularly in mothers with gestational diabetes or in rural areas with tele-lactation support.

Theoretical Framework and Practice Change

Using Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, the project shows that education style directly impacts confidence and outcomes. Additionally, Kotter's Change Theory

Table: Key Findings		
Comparison	Nurse-led Education	IBCLC-led Support
Maternal Self-Efficacy	Moderate improvement	Significantly increased
Breastfeeding Duration	Often declined by 6 weeks	Sustained or increased
Access and Cost	More accessible but less specialized	Higher cost but better outcomes
Integration into Care	Less consistent follow-up	Embedded into postpartum care

supports integrating continuing education programs for nurses to become IBCLCs. This structured approach includes creating urgency, forming partnerships, and embedding support within care routines.

Conclusion and Recommendations

IBCLC-led education leads to increased motivation, duration, and success in breastfeeding at six weeks postpartum. Nurse-led education remains valuable but may benefit from enhancement through specialized certification. Rural gaps in access suggest telehealth expansion could provide equitable solutions. ■

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References

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