



# Breastfeeding Exclusive

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## Special Edition Newsletter on the APHA Annual Meeting

In November, more than 12,000 public health professionals gathered in Philadelphia for the 137th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association (APHA). Attendees came from around the world to discuss the nation's top public health challenges. The theme this year was "Water and Public Health: The 21st Century Challenge."

This "Special Edition Newsletter" was conceived from our collective excitement following a wonderful APHA meeting full of enlightening breastfeeding sessions.

Special thanks to Drs. Ann Dozier and Melissa Bartick for their contributions to this newsletter special edition.

*Please send comments to Brook Colgan at [brook@email.unc.edu](mailto:brook@email.unc.edu).*

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## MCH Section Sponsors Several Breastfeeding Sessions

By Ann Dozier, RN, PhD

The 2009 MCH Section was pleased to have sponsored five panels and one poster session that included 33 presentations in all. These sessions covered the landscape of breastfeeding issues and included clinical, program, evaluation and community support. Sessions were well attended (and over subscribed in a number of cases). Abstracts from the 2009 and prior years' meetings are available at the APHA website and are easily searchable (<http://www.apha.org/meetings/pastfuture/>).

One of the highlights of the annual meeting is the Martha May Eliot award (an APHA level award). This year was particularly thrilling when Ruth Lawrence, MD was this year's recipient. (<http://www.apha.org/about/awards/09awardrecips/09EliotAward.htm>).



Dr. Miriam Labbok with the 2008 Martha May Eliot Award recipient, Dr. Jonathon Kotch (right), and the 2009 Martha May Eliot Award recipient, Dr. Ruth Lawrence (left).

"We need to create an infra-structure in this country that supports all aspects of breastfeeding," says Melissa Bartick, MD, Chair of the new Breastfeeding Forum.

## MCH Section Breastfeeding Committee at APHA Makes a Splash

By Emily Taylor, MPH, CD (DONA)

Breastfeeding is gaining visibility as a critical component of comprehensive public health work at the Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, in large part due to the efforts of the MCH Section Breastfeeding Committee. (See coverage of MCH sessions on breastfeeding, p1 and p4.)

The committee organized around three primary activities at this year's meeting. The first is an expressed need for more meaningful coordination with other Sections, especially those with the greatest relevance to breastfeeding. A sub-committee was formed to determine a formalized method for cultivating a strong network. The second activity was to begin planning breastfeeding sessions for the 2010 meeting in Colorado. The group decided to put forward two ideas: 1) a panel of federal government agencies to detail ongoing breastfeeding initiatives as they relate to the new Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding (expected October, 2010), and 2) a discussion of research and programming on health inequities as predictors and sequelae of not breastfeeding. Third and finally, the group identified members with willingness to review breastfeeding-related abstracts for future APHA meetings and the AJPH.

The committee also wishes to share its praise and gratitude for Dr. Ruth Lawrence for her outstanding work to improve MCH through breastfeeding, for which she was honored with the 2009 Martha May Eliot Award.

## APHA Welcomes the New Breastfeeding Forum

By Melissa Bartick, MD

A Forum on Breastfeeding was convened for the first time at this year's annual meeting in November. The Breastfeeding Forum attracts members from many different interest areas within APHA and currently has over 200 members. Its goals include raising awareness of the importance of breastfeeding beyond the traditional maternal-child health orientation, and to advocate broadly for breastfeeding initiatives which are national in scope. As the Forum chair, I feel we need to create an infrastructure in the United States to support all aspects of breastfeeding.

Two years ago, three Sections—MCH, Food and Nutrition, and International Health—worked together to draft the new APHA policy paper on breastfeeding, "A Call to Action on Breastfeeding: a Fundamental Public Health Issue" available at:<http://www.apha.org/advocacy/policy/policysearch/default.htm?id=1360>. The Forum hopes to help answer this call.

## The International Health Section and Breastfeeding

By Miriam Labbok, MD, MPH, IH Section Chair

The International Health Section (IHS), with its more than 1500 members, acts as a focal point for APHA members interested in health and health programs and policies beyond the US borders. The Section continues to work closely with APHA to ensure that the global health perspective is further infused throughout its efforts.

The IHS has a long history of attention to Maternal and Child Health issues. This year, for the first time, we sponsored a very busy welcome booth for international participants. As Chair, I have been working to ensure that MCH issues, especially the reproductive health continuum including breastfeeding, remains an important policy area.

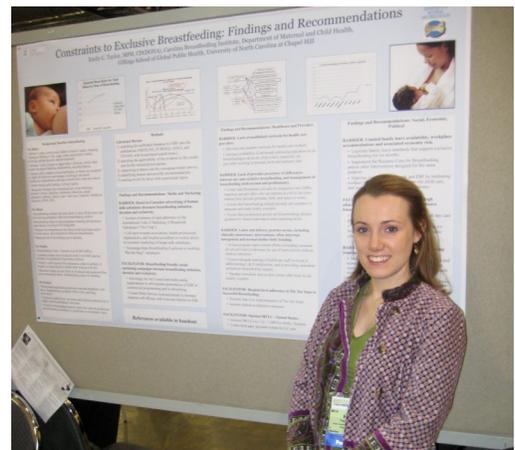
The IHS supports the incorporation of breastfeeding into healthcare everywhere through its Community-based Primary Care Working Group, and through policy and advocacy activities.

This year, the IHS sponsored a session entitled, "Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM): Friend or Foe of Family Planning?" that explored the history and current revitalization of this important method of family planning that helps space births with simultaneous optimal breastfeeding practices. IHS also co-sponsored a session "Expanding maternal and child health care services in developing countries: Advances and challenges" that included a presentation on "Best practices in breastfeeding support: Controversies and recommendations."

"Carolina Breastfeeding Institute: Nurturing our future, normalizing optimal infant and young child feeding to achieve maternal and child health, and promoting attention to the mother/child dyad."

## Breastfeeding and the 2009 APHA theme: Water and Public Health

Although not entirely intuitive, this year's APHA theme, "Water and Public Health: The 21st Century Challenge," relates to breastfeeding in many ways. Firstly, human milk is approximately 88 percent water and meets all hydration requirements of infants. Every time a mother breastfeeds, she gives her infant water through her milk. Secondly, in the case of illness such as diarrhea, if an infant becomes dehydrated, increased breastfeeding is recommended. Mother's milk is nature's own oral rehydration solution as it is a perfect combination of water and electrolytes. Thirdly, human milk is ready-to-use, unlike formula that may be powdered and require the addition of water, which may not be safe for drinking.



Emily Taylor, MPH, CD (DONA) with her poster on "Constraints to Exclusive Breastfeeding."

## Breastfeeding Oral Sessions at APHA

Many wonderful sessions were dedicated to breastfeeding at this year's APHA annual meeting. Use the following links to find the abstracts of the oral sessions on breastfeeding:



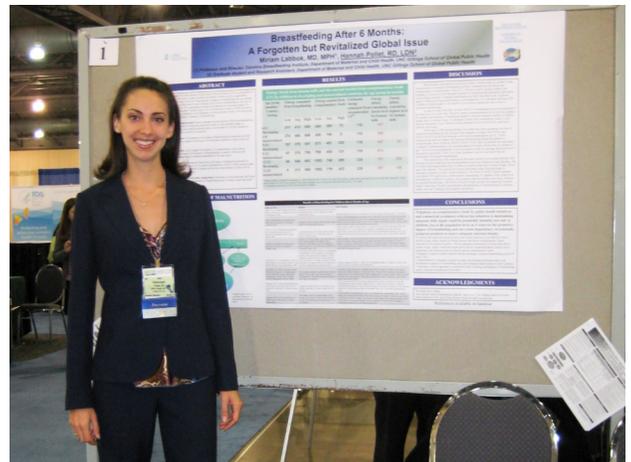
- **Evaluating Breastfeeding Programs:**  
<http://apha.confex.com/apha/137am/webprogram/Session25871.html>
- **Breastfeeding: Developing Community Support:**  
<http://apha.confex.com/apha/137am/webprogram/Session27027.html>
- **Breastfeeding Education:**  
<http://apha.confex.com/apha/137am/webprogram/Session27701.html>
- **New Perspectives in Breastfeeding Promotion:**  
<http://apha.confex.com/apha/137am/webprogram/Session25974.html>
- **Breastfeeding: Clinical Programs:**  
<http://apha.confex.com/apha/137am/webprogram/Session27028.html>.

## My First American Public Health Association Conference

By Hannah Pollet, RD, LDN

For my first American Public Health Association (APHA) conference, I was given the wonderful opportunity to co-author a poster with Dr. Labbok. The environment was supportive and encouraging. Many presenters received great feedback and useful constructive criticism from experts in the field, quite often from one of the very authors they had referenced!

Various functions were tailored specifically for students, including the Student Assembly, and provided the in-person contact to help us first-timers feel not only connected, but invested in APHA. Emails and websites are useful tools for disseminating information, but meeting leadership members face to face throughout various interest groups and taskforces added greatly to my interest in getting more involved. I appreciated the opportunity to meet other students, future colleagues and leaders in the field, who are on the verge of making huge contributions to public health.



A distinct exhaustion comes along with five days of lectures, presentations, and dinner meetings, but academically and professionally speaking my wells are full. The encouragement to continue working in breastfeeding and maternal nutrition, publish conclusions from the poster presentation (so that they might be referenced!), and an interview by Ms. Rose Hoban, NPR journalist on health issues, sent me home with a new perspective on the importance of being involved in APHA.

**We welcome your feedback: Please send your comments and suggestions to [cbi@unc.edu](mailto:cbi@unc.edu).**