Wednesday Webinar: April 2019

Infant Feeding in Emergencies: CHEER’s work with refugees in Greece

Presented by
Anne Merewood, PhD, MPH, IBCLC, Director of CHAMPS & CHEER
Airinie Azhar, CHEER Coordinator for Greece

Press *6 to mute your line, #6 to unmute. Please do not press hold.
You can use the chat box for questions during the presentation.
Upcoming CHAMPS Trainings

• (4- hour) Garden Park Medical Center
  • Thursday, May 30\textsuperscript{th}, 2019 (morning and afternoon)

• (15- hour) Greenwood Leflore Hospital
  • Friday, May 31\textsuperscript{st} to Sunday, June 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2019

• Trainings are open to all CHAMPS hospitals and CHAMPS community partners. You can register for the trainings at CHEERequity.org/trainings
SAVE THE DATE!

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29
PRE-CONFERENCE & COMMUNITY FORUM

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30
CHAMPS CONFERENCE 2019

Clyde Muse Center in Pearl, MS

FUNDED BY:

BOWER FOUNDATION
Upcoming Wednesday Webinars

Webinars are held in collaboration with the Mississippi State Department of Health and are scheduled on Wednesdays from 12-1p CST

- **May 15th**: “How to be Successful: Staffing & Sustainability at Baby-Friendly Hospitals.”
  
  *Presented by Alice Chaney Herndon, MSN, RNC-NIC; Amy Brower, BSN, RNC-OB; Rene Simpson, BSN, RN, IBCLC; LouAnn Wall, RN, IBCLC*

For log-in information or for slides and recordings of past webinars, visit: [cheerequity.org/webinars.html](http://cheerequity.org/webinars.html)

If there are topics you would like covered, please email CHAMPSbreastfeed@gmail.com or talk to your CHAMPS hospitals coach about your ideas.
CHEER’S work in Greece:
Infant Feeding in Emergencies among refugee populations

Anne Merewood PhD MPH IBCLC
Director, Center for Health Equity, Education and Research (CHEER) at
Boston University School of Medicine
Airinie Azhar, National Director, CHEERinGreece
Today’s webinar

• Introduction to CHEER
• Athens and Greece
• Overview of IFE (Infant Feeding in Emergencies)
• Supporting mothers in their feeding practices
CHEER’s Background

• The Breastfeeding Center (1997) - originally a clinical service, became a research-based Center in 2006
• Became CHEER (Center for Health Equity, Education, and Research) in 2016 with a focus on intervention and evaluation
• We work across the USA with a particular focus on Mississippi and ‘Indian county’ (Midwest, Alaska, Montana)
• CHEER is a national member of the US Breastfeeding Committee
Populations CHEER works with in the US

- African American populations in the south
- American Indian and Alaska Natives
Athens, Greece
Breastfeeding work in Greece

• Breastfeeding has many champions and an emerging core of clinician lactation supporters

• La Leche League of Greece has long supported breastfeeding
Galaxias IBCLC Organization’s 12th annual conference – April 13/14 2019
Refugees in Greece: Who, where, why?

- Increased, intense conflict in Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa
- Refugees flee by land or sea to Europe - Greece, Italy, Spain
- The goal is usually to reach Western Europe but as borders have closed, many are stuck in entry nations (73,000 in Greece)
- Greece is in an economic crisis and somewhat dysfunctional
- Camps are over-capacity, shelters are full, and aid is backlogged
- Conditions range from fair to appalling depending on location
## UNHCR record of arrivals to Greece

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Sea arrivals</th>
<th>Land arrivals</th>
<th>Dead and missing</th>
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<td>856,723</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
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</table>
Breastfeeding in emergencies

• In crises, breastfeeding becomes a matter of life and death
• Antibiotics, vaccinations, electricity, literacy, etc. protect formula-fed infants in stable situations
• In emergencies, formula feeding is not safe
Meeting the WHO recommendation for 6m of exclusive breastfeeding

• Save >800,000 lives every year, most of them children under 6 months
• Prevent ½ of all diarrheal diseases and 1/3 of all respiratory infections in children in low- and middle-income countries
Breastfeeding vs formula feeding in a crisis

• To make, store, and feed formula safely, you need:
  • Infant formula...enough, and age appropriate (not animal milk)
  • Reliable source of clean water
  • Place to boil/sterilize water
  • Sterile feeding bottles
  • Refrigeration
  • Bottles refrigerated, not re-used
  • Ability to read the directions (concentration of powder to water; frequency and volume of feeds, etc)
Breastfeeding....needs no

- Sterilization
- Refrigeration
- Bottles
- Money
- Literacy
- Special diet...
Breastfeeding advantages for women

- Greater self esteem
- Ability to control something – no need for any outside help
- Empowering and fulfilling
- It’s FREE! All the money spent on formula could be spent on those darn diapers!!
Breastfeeding in Greece

- Among Greek women (2017): Initiation around 94%
- Exclusive breastfeeding at 1 month – 40%
- Exclusive at 6 months <1%
- Cesarean rate around 60%
Breastfeeding among refugee women

- CHEER assessed infant feeding status among infants of refugee women in greater Athens analysing deidentified infant feeding information supplied by AMURTEL, collected via client intake form over 6 months in 2017/18
Breastfeeding among refugees in Athens


- 318 mother-infant pairs from 30 nations; most common nationalities Afghani (37%) and Syrian (24%)
- 40% of births by Caesarean section
- 92% of women initiated breastfeeding
- Median duration of exclusive breastfeeding = 4 weeks
- Most common reasons for starting formula:
  - ‘Not enough breastmilk’ (31%) and
  - ‘Formula given by a health professional’ (19%)
Breastfeeding among refugees in Athens

- Not breastfeeding within the first hour associated with shortened duration of any (AHR 6.81; 95% CI 1.81-25.62) and exclusive breastfeeding (AHR 2.1; 95% CI 1.24-3.55).
- Cesarean birth associated with shorter duration of exclusive breastfeeding (AHR 2.01; 95% CI 1.24-3.55).

**Conclusion:** WHO infant feeding guidelines are not being met.....
IFE guidelines in Attika area camps

• The Emergency Nutrition Network and UNICEF created the Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies Operational Guidelines (OG-IFE) to guide organizers/administrators/volunteers working in camps/other emergency situations
• CHEER assessed implementation of IFE Operational Guidelines by reviewing UNHCR’s Site Profiles for Greek Refugee camps (May 2018) and by 1 on 1 interviews with the field coordinators responsible for day-to-day camp operation in the 6 Attika-area camps
IFE guidelines in Attika camps

• 6000+ refugees in 6 Attika camps
• UNHCR’s Site Profiles documents mother-infant safe spaces at 3, but field coordinators report only 1
• IFE guidelines recommend policies and training, but no field coordinators were aware of any IFE-related policies or any training for clinicians, staff, or volunteers
So what are the IFYCE guidelines?

• Created by UNICEF ++ as part of the WHO/UNICEF global strategy on infant and young child feeding
• Apply to emergency preparedness, response and recovery to minimize infant and young child morbidity and mortality
IFE guidelines recommend

• 6 months of exclusive breastfeeding
• Relevant training for those who work with refugees
• Policy and guidelines for emergency settings where refugees live
After this assessment, CHEER began to:

• Work in 3 refugee camps and 1 shelter offering hands on help
• Train at non profits and agencies based in Athens
• Recruit volunteers and supporters to help with the work

No other organizations offer this type of outreach or training to professionals in Greece right now

Athens NGO Co-ordination Group meet at CHEER offices in Greece
Skaramagas refugee camp

- Largest refugee camp on mainland Greece
- ~3000 residents; 10-12 births/month
- Managed by
  - The Greek Ministry of Migration
  - The Danish Refugee Council
  - Drop in the Ocean (Woman Space)
At Skaramagas Women & Baby area, CHEER…

- Installed a weigh scale
- Taught mothers and volunteers how to operate the sterilizer
- Runs regular support groups for women
- Trained Drops in the Ocean volunteers
Skaramagas work
Eleonas refugee camp

• First Refugee Camp to open on mainland Greece in 2015
• Currently ~2300 residents
• Managed by the Greek government
• CHEER works with Project Elea
CHEER at Eleonas refugee camp

- Operates with Project Elea in the Women’s Space
- Installed a baby weigh scale
- Runs weekly support group and informational sessions:
  - Reproductive health
  - Nutrition
  - Breastfeeding
- Monitoring infants and babies - growth
Oinofyta Refugee Camp (60km from Athens)

- CHEER travels with a mobile doctor team in their ambulance when space is available
- Care is at the ‘Do Your Part’ community center a few km from the Camp
• CHEER installed a baby scale and measuring chart
• Weight checks on infants and young children
• Begun to monitor infant growth
Provocando la Paz shelter

- Down the street from CHEER’s office in Athens
- Run by Spanish volunteers
- One of rare locations offering housing for families with children
- About 20 families/60 people/mostly children/9 babies under 6 m
- Emergency housing well run but crowded and full
- Turn away 1-2 families per day due to lack of space
First group session at Provocando

- All moms and babies who speak French, Arabic or Farsi!
- CHEER provided Farsi interpreter
- Many babies had not been weighed since birth
- Misinformation – sometimes from medical professionals – was rife
- Mothers had many worries and questions
- Inter-cultural experience was tremendous
Reproductive health discussion at Provocando

- Talked about menstruation
- Women’s monthly cycles
- How you become pregnant
- Contraception
- What’s next?
What kind of scenarios did we find?

• Medical professionals had told mothers to add extra formula and sugar to bottled milk to give babies calories and ‘energy’
• Women desperately worried about lack of supply
• When we weighed infants, most were on track for weight gain
• CHEER installed a sterilizer to make bottle feeding safer
• Began coordinating with traveling volunteer doctors
Set up moving forward

- Provocando volunteers and managers attended CHEER training
- CHEER tested the weigh scale and brought tape measures
- Payment to Farsi interpreter
- Trained local volunteers
- Began weekly visits to track weight and growth
What next?

- We are seeking funding and donations
- This work differs from other CHEER work as it involves more of a direct service component
- We have done some training at the larger organizations where doctors and volunteers operate and our goal is to do more upstream training work internationally
- We are looking to collaborate with Greek clinicians and lactation groups
- “Baby-Friendly Crete” and “Baby-Friendly Cyprus”?!