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breastfeeding
association**

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Hospitals ignoring important treatment for sick babies: breastmilk
Visiting lactation expert calls for formal protocols to protect breastfeeding

Health professionals have a vital role in educating and supporting the parents of premature babies so they receive breastmilk, according to U.S. lactation expert, Dr Diane Spatz.

However, without the commitment of knowledgeable healthcare providers to ensure support when mothers are separated from their babies, many infants fail to receive their mothers' own milk.

"As healthcare professionals, we should be doing everything in our power to maintain the breastfeeding relationship. Hospitals need to develop specific protocols based on research evidence and educate their staff to protect breastfeeding when maternal infant separation occurs," said Dr Spatz.

According to Dr Spatz, hospitals in the United States and Australia share a common problem. "Doctors and nurses receive very little education about breastfeeding— maybe only one hour in their whole course. If health care professionals don't have the education and training, mothers get no advice or bad advice," said Dr Spatz.

"The science clearly tells us that human milk is the optimal form of nutrition for all infants. When an infant is hospitalised due to prematurity or illness, the need to protect breastfeeding is even more important," Dr Spatz said.

A study (Miracle, DJ, Meier, PP and Bennett, PA 2004) shows that mothers often do not initiate human milk feeding for their premature infants because of lack of role models, fear of pain, and concerns regarding possible lifestyle modifications, but when they receive information about the benefits of human milk, and support to initiate breastfeeding, they prefer to provide milk for their babies.

Diane Spatz is an Associate Professor and the Helen M Shearer Term Chair in Nutrition at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. She also works as a clinical nurse specialist in lactation at the Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, the leading Children's hospital in the United States.

Dr Spatz will be speaking at the Australian Breastfeeding Association's seminars *Breastfeeding: Milk, Health and Love* in Brisbane, 27 February; Sydney 28 February, Geelong, 1 March; and Adelaide, 2 March. For more details go to <http://www.lrc.asn.au/2007/>

While in Australia, Dr Spatz is also developing a training program with nursing staff at the Royal Brisbane Hospital to promote human milk feeding for sick and premature babies.

To arrange an interview with Diane Spatz, or for further information please contact:

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