

Philippine Daily Inquirer, Friday, August 3, 2007

Breast Milk Is Recommended for Infants PHAP Supports World Breastfeeding Week

The Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP) joins the nation in celebrating World Breastfeeding Week on August 1 to 7. Our shared objective is to promote the health and well-being of infants. Breast milk is the ideal nutrition for infants.

Thanks to the efforts of government and health care professionals, the Philippines has accomplished a commendable 87% breastfeeding rate (overall prevalence of breastfeeding), which has remained steady for ten years. More encouraging positive trends are revealed by the same government data:

54% of Filipino mothers start breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth;
80% start breastfeeding within a day after birth;
Filipino infants are being breastfed more frequently;
The percentage of infants under six months old who are breastfed six or more times in a 24-hour period increased from 71 percent in 1998 to 92 percent in 2003; and
Over 30% of mothers are continuing to breastfeed up to 23 months (as of 2005).

Our objective to ensure the health and well-being of infants cannot stop here. Unfortunately, many non-breastfed Filipino infants are fed inappropriate alternatives such as rice water (am) or evaporated milk. All mothers – including those who do not breastfeed must have access to information and support about proper feeding practices and alternatives.

PHAP is committed to working with interested parties to develop and communicate positive factual information about the importance of breastfeeding. Efforts to increase breastfeeding rates should include making infant feeding information more readily available to mothers to help them make fully informed decisions.

We, the members of the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines, believe that breast milk is the ideal nutrition for infants. But for those infants who do not receive breast milk, our mission is to provide the best possible alternatives. The World Health Organization recognizes that for the non-breastfed infant, infant formula is appropriate when it is “available, affordable, and can be safely used.” We encourage mothers who cannot or choose not to breastfeed to consult their doctor about safe, healthy alternatives to their infant.

The World Health Organization states, “Breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants.”

We, the members of PHAP, agree.

Sources:

2003 National demographic and Health Survey. National Statistics Office

United Nations Children's Fund. At a Glance: Philippines. 2005

http://unicef.org/infobycountry/philippines_statistics.html

World Health Organization, Feeding the Non-Breastfed Child 6-24 Months of Age,
March 2004

World Health Organization, Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, 2003