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BREASTFEEDING AND PHYSICIAN MOTHERS -RESULTS OF AN INTERNATIONAL SURVEY

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We report data from 581 physician mothers contacted through the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, using an online questionnaire. Mean exclusive breastfeeding duration was 4.2 months (standard deviation of 2.3, range 0-12) and mean breastfeeding duration was 12.3 months (SD 7.3, range 0-54). The participants intended to breastfeed 68% of their 947 children for at least 12 months. While 98% of infants were breastfed at birth, only 58% continued to receive breast milk at 12 months. Variables that had a statistically significant association with breastfeeding duration after controlling for other covariates were maternal goal for breastfeeding duration, length of maternity leave, and maternal perception of availability of time to express milk at work after return to employment postpartum. Duration of exclusive breastfeeding was negatively associated with maternal age at the time of the study and positively with perception of availability

of time to express milk at work after return to employment postpartum. Being in practice at the time of childbirth was associated with longer duration of exclusive breastfeeding, compared to being in training. Personal exclusive breastfeeding duration had a statistically significant association with self-reporting breastfeeding promotion among female housestaff (residents and/or fellows), colleagues, staff, or students as well as frequency of breastfeeding discussion with pregnant patients or new mothers. Our findings suggest that maternal infant-feeding intentions and work-related factors play an important role in infant-feeding behavior of physician mothers. Longer maternity leave as well as protected time at work for breastfeeding mothers might result in significant improvement in their breastfeeding duration.

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