Obesity: The Equity Issue
Tackling the root causes of childhood obesity

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Obesity

- Causes of Obesity are complex
- Life course approach: health development as a lifelong process
- Focus on prevention
- A view of prevention by looking at root cause
Initiatives

- White House plan to cut childhood obesity by 2.5% by 2015
- Educate and help women conceive at a healthy weight and have a healthy weight gain during pregnancy
- Encourage and support breastfeeding
- Payment for services needed to help prevent child obesity
Why Infancy?

Shifting the paradigm from disease focus toward the root: infancy and childhood

- Holistic perspective that looks at environment, social and emotional aspects of regulation and early childhood development
- The mother-baby dyad
Background

The prevalence of obesity in low-income two to four year olds increased from 12.4% in 1998 to 14.5% in 2003 and 14.6% in 2008.

In 2008 obesity prevalence was highest among American Indian or Alaskan Native (21.2%) and Hispanic children (18.5%).
Obesity

Boys

- 33% Hispanic/Latino
- 35.7% African-American
- 51.2% Mexican-American

Girls

- 30.1% Hispanic/Latino
- 46.4% African-American
- 36.7% Mexican-American
• Significant literature that values the mother-baby dyad as a focus for health interventions that last a lifetime

...“the environment in early life can determine the risk of obesity in childhood”  *BMJ June 2005*

“evidence that increased intensity and exclusivity of breast-feeding is associated with decreased obesity…in childhood and adolescence”  *Journal of Nutrition Feb 2009*
• “Human milk is exquisitely fitted for optimal infant growth and development and may uniquely modulate …pathways involved in the regulation of body weight.” *Journal of Nutrition* Feb 2009

• The Growing up Today Study (GUTS) “….breast-feeding was associated with reduced overweight..in childhood. Breast feeding was inversely associated with childhood obesity ..” *Diabetes Care* October 2006
LA Times March 2009

• “Rapid weight gain during the first 6 months of infancy appears to increase the chances that a child will be obese by age three... The link between rapid infant weight gain and obesity by age 3 was striking...
Title: Prenatal influences on choice of newborn feeding at WCHOB

Investigator: Amos M. Moberg, M.D.

Research preceptor: Stephen J. Turkovich, M.D.
Breastfeeding is the optimal way to nourish a newborn, and is the healthiest choice for infant and mother in the majority of cases.\(^1\)

- Reduction in rates of AOM
- Increased mucosal immunity
- Reduction in gastrointestinal infections
- Reduction in respiratory infections
- Reduced risk atopic disease/asthma
- Reduced risk of obesity
- Reduced risk of SIDS
- Reduced risk of necrotizing enterocolitis
- Reduced risk of food allergy
- Reduced risk of pediatric leukemia
- Reduced risk of diabetes mellitus

- Reduced risk of type 2 diabetes
- Reduced rates of breast cancer
- Reduced rates of ovarian cancer
- Reduced risk of postpartum depression
- Reduced risk of osteoporosis

- Considerably cheaper
- Faster return to prenatal weight
The Equity equation

• Interventions need to be inclusive of input from the population at risk, and be sensitive to diverse norms, cultural traditions, practices and choice
Next steps

• Understanding factors that influence not only initiation but sustenance of the breastfeeding mother after she delivers

• Recognizing the implementation of policy that addresses the need for employers to provide adequate time and a place of security to breastfeed
Next steps

- Community Health workers/doulas trained as lactation specialists, and reimbursement as lactation consultants
- A 5 year study that looks at outcome initiatives listed, from birth to age 5
- Data from our community that looks at the number of lactation consultants that come from communities that represent diversity