Cultural Sensitivity in Breastfeeding for Women of Color

By: Leanne Rye Brock, B.S., CD, CLC, ALC
“First, available research on breastfeeding interventions fails to consider the influence of racism across all system levels of social ecological spectrum, although systemic discrimination is well documented and undermines African American women’s chances for optimal health. This represents a common oversight because most breastfeeding researches do not address discrimination and are also criticized for failing to address manifestations of racism that may impact breastfeeding disparities....”

Barriers to Care

• Normalization of artificial feeding
• Dominant culture framing
• Suboptimal maternity care practices and facilities
• Lack of support from medical staff
• Socioeconomic status
• Insufficient clinical support if any
• Lack of Cultural Awareness Education
• Lack of differences in care provider practice
• Inadequate social support
• Historical traumas and negative relationship with breastfeeding
• Sexualizing breasts
• Water
• Access to electricity or space for pumping at work
• Myths
Women of Color Report

• Less prenatal advice from their healthcare providers regarding breastfeeding
• Less breastfeeding education and support from healthcare providers in community and hospital settings
• Discriminatory behaviors and failure to listen to their concerns leading to feelings of distrust
• Perceived lack of info about breastfeeding
Culturally Sensitive Care - Unpacking Our Bags

• Equal and Equitable Access to Care
• Disempowering Stereotypes
• Creating a Safe Space
• Relatable Images of Breastfeeding Mothers of Color
• Educate families not just mama’s
• Historical traumas and negative relationship with breastfeeding
“Any solutions put forth to address breastfeeding disparities in the African American community that fails to address pervasive and insidious systemic racism will be insufficient – more focus should be on systems chance to make a lasting difference on the health and human potential of the next generation of African Americans.”

Sherry Payne, MSN, RN, CNE, IBCLC