PRESS RELEASE

12th International Breastfeeding and Lactation Symposium
April 7-8, 2017, Florence, Italy

Myth or fact? Do you know the truth about human milk?

Baar/Bologna, 14 March 2017. Could new information change the way we approach breastfeeding and infant feeding in the hospital, in the neonatal ward, at work, and in public? Could deeper insights into the value of human milk and breastfeeding inspire health system and policy changes? April 7-8, in Florence, Italy, the 12th International Breastfeeding and Lactation Symposium brings together a stellar congress of the world’s leading researchers in human milk and breastfeeding, to present compelling new evidence of the vital role human milk plays in helping children, mothers, families and society to flourish. Myth or fact? Find out what you knew already, what you didn’t know, and what is yet to be unveiled at this year’s symposium.

Myth or fact? The truth about human milk

1. Globally, 80% of babies are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life.
   
   **MYTH.** Only 40% of infants are exclusively breastfed, largely because lactation support is not available during the crucial first hours after birth. At the symposium, Dr. Diane Spatz presents proven strategies for improving human milk and breastfeeding rates, tailored for low, medium, and high resource settings.

2. Through Holder pasteurization, donor milk is gently treated, so that the milk preserves all of its vital bioactive properties.
   
   **MYTH.** Holder pasteurization heats the milk at 62.5°C for 30 minutes, destroying numerous nutritional and bioactive properties in human milk. Donor milk expert Dr. Guido Moro describes an alternative method of pasteurization, which could help to preserve the power of human milk.

3. Human milk and cow’s milk have approximately the same numbers of oligosaccharides (sugars).
   
   **MYTH.** To date, scientists have identified approximately 40 cow’s milk oligosaccharides, and over 200 human milk oligosaccharides (HMOs). HMOs serve as prebiotics, boosting infant digestion, destroying harmful intestinal bacteria, and activating the infant’s immune system. At the symposium, Dr. Katie Hinde will disclose dramatic differences between the milk from different mammals.

4. Human milk is only a source of nutrition for the growing infant. Infant formula easily replaces it with the same ingredients.
   
   **MYTH.** Human milk delivers not only nutrition but also complex, bioactive components that help the infant to grow and develop. Only a fraction of these components exist in formula. Symposium speaker Dr. Bo Lönnerdal explains that human milk proteins, in particular, have unique bioactive properties that drive and support infant development.

5. The craniofacial structure of tiny preterm infants is soft, and they are not developed enough to latch onto the breast, so forcing them to try to breastfeed can result in a permanent malformation of the craniofacial structure.
MYTH. Helping a tiny preterm infant to gradually develop the vacuum strength and suck-swallow-breathe coordination to breastfeed can help their craniofacial structure develop along a more normal and healthy trajectory. Symposium speaker Dr. Donna Geddes describes the powerful beneficial impact breastfeeding can have on preterm infant brain and craniofacial development.

6. Sudden infant collapse in the first hours and days after delivery has been cited as a reason for delaying skin-to-skin contact between mothers and newborns in the maternity ward and neonatal ward.

FACT. Skin-to-skin, mother-to-infant contact in the first two hours of life is crucial to helping infants to bond, develop and thrive. Dr. Riccardo Davanzo shares his protocol for ensuring that mothers and infants are supported and supervised for safe skin-to-skin contact.

7. Breastfeeding could prevent as many as 25,000 children from dying of cancer each year.

FACT. Nearly 100,000 children under 15 die of cancer each year. 40% of cancers in those children are leukaemia or lymphoma, and breastfeeding can reduce the risk of those two childhood cancers by 64%. Breastmilk is also associated with dramatic reductions in breast cancer risk for breastfeeding mothers. Symposium speaker Dr. Catharina Svanborg has devoted 15 years of research to discovering the cancer-fighting properties in human milk provided by a unique complex HAMLET. Could HAMLET be playing a role in human milk’s protection against 40 forms of cancer?

8. Many traditional neonatal infant growth standards are still based on formula-fed infants, who grow differently than infants who received human milk.

FACT. Human milk-fed infant do grow differently compared to formula-fed infants. Symposium speaker Dr. Luigi Corvaglia explains why new neonatal growth and development metrics should be based on human milk feeding, rather than formula feeding.

9. Parents of infants in the neonatal ward are frequently prevented from visiting their preterm newborns. This results in lower breastfeeding rates, poorer infant outcomes, and parental insecurity in caring for the infant at home.

FACT. Making parental contact and care part of the neonatal program teaches parents how to better care for their vulnerable babies. Symposium scientist Dr. Shoo Lee shares the Family Integrated Care Model, proven in three countries to result in higher breastfeeding rates, better infant outcomes, and less stress and worry for parents.

10. The UK could save £30.1 million in direct healthcare costs each year, by feeding human milk to each annual preterm newborn population.

FACT. Although only 10% of the annual newborn population is born preterm, hospital treatment of preterm infants accounts for 50% of all newborn healthcare costs globally. “The health economic value of feeding human milk to the preterm infant” symposium display proves how great the benefits of feeding human milk to preterm infants are for national health and economies.

What was new? What does it mean for the welfare of infants, mothers, and society? Come to the symposium to learn much more from the world’s leading experts. Find out what human milk really means for the world.

Registration for journalists:

Pre-symposium Media Conference, Friday, 7 April, 10:30-11:30 am. Journalists are invited to participate in the entire conference, and to interview all nine speakers, or journalists can just attend the media conference, where an overview of each speaker’s academic presentation will be offered, followed by a Q&A.

Register for the full program, for the media conference only, and/or for online access to special media focus sessions: www.medela.com/mediaregistration
About Medela

Founded in 1961 by Olle Larsson and headquartered in Switzerland, Medela today is led by his son Michael Larsson. Medela concentrates on two business units: "Human Milk", the leader in the development and production of breast milk feeding products and solutions, and "Healthcare", which engineers and manufactures highly innovative medical vacuum technology solutions. Medela conducts basic research in partnership with leading scientists, medical professionals and universities, and uses the research results in the development of its breastfeeding products and solutions. Medela has 18 subsidiaries in Europe, North America and Asia, and together with independent partners distributes its products in more than 100 countries. The company employs more than 1,800 staff worldwide, 440 of whom are located in the Canton of Zug, Switzerland.

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