

National
 Organization of
 Mothers
 Of
 Twins
 Clubs, Inc.

SUBJECT: BREASTFEEDING MULTIPLE BIRTH INFANTS

RESEARCHER: Parents of Multiple Births Association of Canada (POMBA)

DATE: 1985

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

This report summarizes a study conducted by the Parents of Multiple Births Association of Canada (POMBA) in 1985. This organization has studied the breastfeeding of multiples since 1979 when a short survey was distributed among member clubs. The results of that survey led to the publishing of the book *BREASTFEEDING TWINS, TRIPLETS AND QUADRUPLETS: 195 PRACTICAL HINTS FOR SUCCESS IN 1982*. In 1985 POMBA decided to gather new information in order to update the book, resulting in a second survey given to mothers in member clubs who breastfed or did not breastfeed their multiples.

RESULTS:

A report was released in December, 1986, which summarizes the results of the survey. A total of 457 surveys were returned:

316 from mothers who breastfed their multiples and 141 from mothers who did not breastfeed or who stopped within the first week after birth. Most of these mothers (439) were mothers of twins and 18 were mothers of triplets.

The results were reported separately for mothers who breastfed and for those who did not so that differences might show up, and so that factors influencing mothers' decisions to breastfeed might appear. The investigators found that prematurity of infants seems to affect the breastfeeding decision, since 46% of the mothers who did not breastfeed had infants who were 3 or more weeks premature. Similarly, 40% of the mothers who had smaller babies (less than 5 pounds at birth) decided not to breastfeed.

Of the mothers who did not breastfeed their multiples, 35% had planned to but were unable to successfully breastfeed their infants. Reasons given were that babies were premature, the mothers were too ill, the babies were ill or in a different hospital, or the family was not supportive.

Half of the mothers who breastfed did so for four or more months (14% breastfed for more than 11 months). Reasons given for not continuing after 3 months of breastfeeding were insufficient milk, physical exhaustion, nipple problems, or inconvenience. Most of the mothers (55%) supplemented their own breastmilk with either formula or milk from a milk bank. Mothers listed problems they had with breastfeeding along with solutions that worked for them, presumably for inclusion in the revised publication which will assist breastfeeding mothers of multiples.

The report concludes with a statement of the limitations of the study along with a summary of patterns thought to influence mothers decisions to breastfeed multiples. It concludes that many mothers successfully breastfeed multiples, that a combination of breast and formula are often satisfactory, and that the criteria of total breastfeeding should not be a measure of success when breastfeeding multiple birth infants.
