Indigenous Breastfeeding Counselor (IBC): A Culturally Relevant Breastfeeding Intervention for Native American Mothers

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Background

• Native American (NA) mothers have low breastfeeding rates due to a lack of cultural breastfeeding knowledge and support in NA communities.1,2
• Breastfeeding knowledge was passed down generationally by grandmothers and women within one’s community; this was disrupted due to colonization, forced assimilation, historical trauma, boarding school experiences,1 and the introduction of infant formula.3
• No culturally-specific breastfeeding interventions for NA mothers exist in the literature.

Purpose & Aims

• The purpose of this quality improvement project is to adapt, deliver, and evaluate an Indigenous Breastfeeding Counselor (IBC) course and aims to:
  1) increase Indigenous participants’ perceived confidence in knowledge identified from prior course evaluations, and
  2) evaluate satisfaction with the IBC course.

Translational Frameworks

• The Knowledge-to-Action4 Cycle Using Indigenous Approaches5 is a culturally relevant framework.
• Each of the seven phases (see right) correlate to Indigenous systems already in place, welcome different points-of-view, and acknowledge and respect existing Indigenous knowledge systems.

Intervention

• The culturally-specific IBC course decolonizes how Indigenous breastfeeding counselors are trained and evaluated and filled knowledge gaps identified in prior course surveys
  • The session on “Communication and Counseling Using Indigenous Knowledge” was delivered via Zoom in one 2-hour session and began with a traditional Anishinaabe prayer by a local community cultural advisor/fluent Ojibwe speaker.

Methods

Design & Setting: One-group, presurvey and double-postsurvey design (3-timepoints) set in Minnesota
Participants: N=7, Ojibwe women (71.4%), 35+ years old (78.8%), working as Doula/Birthworkers and Lactation Counselors (78.8%), with <5 years of experience (44.4%)
Measures: 10-item breastfeeding knowledge scale (5-point Likert) and 6-item course evaluation survey with open-ended questions
Analysis: Descriptive statistics, Kruskal Wallis H, Content analysis

Aim 1: Knowledge Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Pre Md (IQR)</th>
<th>Post Md (IQR)</th>
<th>Retention Md (IQR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident I understand/can…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The role of elders in helping lactating women and their role within the community</td>
<td>4 (1)</td>
<td>5 (0)</td>
<td>5 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The significance of birth as a ceremony</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>5 (3.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The significance of breastfeeding as a ceremony</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>5 (0)</td>
<td>5 (2.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The essentials of Anishinaabe breastfeeding practices</td>
<td>4 (2)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The historical implications of Indigenous breastfeeding</td>
<td>4 (1)</td>
<td>5 (0)</td>
<td>4 (1.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I can assess and counsel lactating Indigenous women using storytelling</td>
<td>4 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I can counsel lactating Indigenous women using Anishinaabe traditional breastfeeding practices</td>
<td>4 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>4.5 (3.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I can counsel lactating Indigenous women regarding a Traditional Anishinaabe maternal diet</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>4 (3.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I understand the role of extended family and community in supporting lactating Indigenous women</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>5 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I can provide culturally relevant lactation care</td>
<td>4 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>4.5 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

Discussion & Conclusion

• Findings showed that the intervention improved confidence in knowledge, indicating the course may increase cultural transmission of Indigenous breastfeeding knowledge and practices.
• Future studies are needed to determine whether this training increases Indigenous breastfeeding rates among Native American mothers.

Acknowledgement & References

MIIGWECH (THANK YOU)
IBC developer/instructor: Camie Goldhammer, MSW, LCSW, IBCLC (Sisseton-Wahpeton), Kimberly Moore-Salas, IBCLC (Navajo), project’s Cultural Advisors: Millicent Simenson (Anishinaabe/Arikara) & Carol Barrett (Anishinaabe).

REFERENCES