



Media Brief

Southern Command Hospital, Pune; Rajiv Gandhi Govt. MCH Pondicherry; Bloom Healthcare, Chennai and Makunda Hospital, Karimganj get a tag of “Breastfeeding Friendly”

The Breastfeeding Friendly Hospital Initiative launched in 2021 is bearing fruits as structural changes begin to appear in these four hospitals who have already achieved this benchmark.

New Delhi 7th August 2022:-The World Breastfeeding Week Aug 1-7 comes to an end today. The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) a 30-year old organization began this year's action with a theme of “Step Up for Breastfeeding -Educate and Support” and a Focus in India to promote [Breastfeeding Friendly Hospital Initiative](#).

“This is very heartening that hospitals are showing their willingness to reach this benchmark, which the WHO and UNICEF have been advocating for more than 3 decades in order to improve the standard of care in maternity services”, said Dr. Arun Gupta, pediatrician and central coordinator of BPNI; who is leading figure behind this work in India. Further he said, “It is not an acceptable situation, as per NFHS-5, institutional births being 88.6%, however, only 41.8% mothers are able to breastfeed within an hour of birth as recommended by the Government of India and WHO”

The NFHS-5 report also showed that the rate of cesarean delivery has gone up from 17.5 in NFHS-4 to 21.2% in the NFHS-5. It includes 14.3% in public hospital and 47% in the private hospitals). “There is overwhelming evidence from all continents that breastfeeding practices are affected adversely by the Caesarean section. Therefore, we need a policy and practice shift to improve breastfeeding outcomes during Caesarean section.” said Dr. Kiran Guleria, who is head of department of obstetrics at the GTB Hospital and member of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) supervising this initiative. Structural changes are appearing in these hospitals, it is not just a tag. Accreditation of maternity hospitals as “Breastfeeding Friendly” is likely to help mothers both in vaginal and Cesarean section as it lays emphasis on supporting her through implementing policy, governance, practices. [Actually it checks on 18 indicators](#).

The World Health Organisation and UNICEF launched the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) based on “Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding” with the objective to improve breastfeeding practices in the hospitals with maternity services. In 2016, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, launched the [Mothers Absolute Affection \(MAA\) programme in 2016](#) to revitalize efforts towards protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding practices through health system to achieve higher breastfeeding rates. Assessment and award to the hospitals that implement ‘Ten Steps’ is one of the key activity as per the guiding principles of WHO and MAA programme. The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) in collaboration with WHO India, under technical guidance of Government of India, developed, tested and validated the tools for self- assessment and external assessment.

BPNI developed a National Accreditation Centre with the objectives to facilitate assessment and monitoring of especially private hospitals with maternity services using standards that have been field tested and validated under the TAG of the Government of India. BPNI analyses and provides certificate of accreditation to the hospitals, which adhere to the standards validated through independent external assessment, which is valid for 3 years. BPNI provides technical advice, support and services to the hospitals for strengthening their support to breastfeeding mothers, delivered by normal or cesarean section deliveries.

Col G Shridhar, MD, DM (Neonatology) Professor, Dept. of Pediatrics at the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune was excited receiving the accreditation of the Command Hospital (Southern Command). He explained why their hospital wanted it, *“The Breastfeeding Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) is a wonderful opportunity to educate, inform and galvanize health care professionals involved in the care of mothers and infants to step up and follow the guidelines of the IYCF & GOI, MAA Programme. AFMC Pune & CH (SC) Pune have always been at the forefront of quality medical education, patient care and research in the Armed Forces Medical Services. The BFHI Certification is a benchmark we aspire to achieve as this will benefit all mothers and infants under our care.”*

Dr. Shajin T, Pediatrician at the Makunda Hospital that also received accreditation few days back, said, *“The first and foremost step we took was to train our staff well in the skills for ‘WHO’s Ten Steps’ as our education does not address it. The second area is documentation and monitoring of early breastfeeding indicators. The third point is about counselling of pregnant mothers about the breastfeeding and its benefits and risk of formula feeding. The fourth point is to implement the IMS Act in letter and spirit. All this would not happen otherwise”*

Dr. Girdhar Gyani, DG of the Association of Healthcare Providers of India (AHPI), comprising 12000 private hospital including maternity centers, and a key partner in this work said *“Accreditation of private hospitals offering maternity services is based on WHO’s Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding. The objective is to assess the hospitals on how these are*

implemented, and grade them based an independent assessment. It would help in increasing early breastfeeding rates that will reduce neonatal mortality. This is the reason behind our work”

ends.

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Notes for Editors

[Joint Statement WHO and UNICEF](#)

[Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding](#)

[Early initiation of breastfeeding to promote exclusive breastfeeding -WHO](#)