



Why I SPEAK UP for racial equity in Breastfeeding Outcomes

Comments from 2018 KBC Breastfeeding Conference, Nov. 1, 2018

- Sometimes I feel that I have a duty to speak for our clients that don't know the avenues of change, so be the change. Explain the change, work side by side to become the change. Changing the mind of one can be the start of many changes.
- Breastfeeding moms who go back to work too soon or work for a temporary agency do not receive the same consideration to breastfeed/pump at work. How can we bridge that gap? WIC provides formula...sometimes the mom won't come to WIC because she would be tempted to get formula.
- Infant mortality rates in our country are highest in the nation. Women of color and ethnic/cultural minorities in my community often have difficulty accessing the resources and are available. There is a high number of working moms and little to no maternity leave.
- Because we have the racial inequities and barriers to breastfeeding for our communities of color. We do not have enough or sometimes any people of color who represent those communities to help support them with breastfeeding. I also speak up because I am becoming more cognizant of how my lack of seeing this for years has been harmful to my community at large.
- All members of the community deserve access to quality care and up to date information as well as support to achieve their personal breastfeeding goals.
- All women from different walks of life (ethnicity, race, class, education) should be treated the same and have access to the same resources and education.
- To provide evidenced based breastfeeding information to all moms and encourage all moms to breastfeed.
- Minorities are more likely to either not attempt breastfeeding or stop breastfeeding sooner than our white majority.
- Every baby deserves the best possible start in life regardless of their race, socioeconomic position, etc. Breastfeeding provides that opportunity.
- Because others don't see/believe that there is an equity issue in our community They don't think it needs to be a topic of conversation because our community isn't very diverse. I would want someone to speak up for me if I couldn't do it myself or if others weren't listening to me.
- I am an ally. Commonly held beliefs about breastfeeding, especially in black communities can be broken down to reveal inequities in gained knowledge. Dissemination of accurate breastfeeding information should be targeted and intentional. We can't ignore this problem.
- We are all equal. My desire is to meet the need without judgement. Because mothers deserve informed decision making in infant feeding choices, access to care and in family planning.
- My "why" for what I do is to help moms bond better with their baby/babies at birth, as well as after, through breastfeeding. If moms have to go back to work too soon it can rock the foundation of their relationship before it can be built. Statistically, women of color can't stay home long term.
- To work towards providing all families with support that is tailored to their needs. To provide care I wish I had received.
- Because no mother should have to bury their child and all women should be treated with dignity and respect no matter their race/ethnicity or socioeconomic background. Health is not a privilege. It is a right.
- Infant mortality, family strengthening and economic stability.

- I live in an apartment complex in Topeka. Many of the families I interact with in my day to day are low-income or have language barriers or work late hours. I know it's harder for these families than my own family to obtain resources like breastfeeding support. It shouldn't be that people receive inferior resources compared to others, just because of their circumstances or other people's prejudice.
- Because we are all human. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and kindness. Because it does not make sense that in our great country where all are supposed to be equals, we have different - in a bad way - outcomes in breastfeeding. Seriously?
- I honestly do not know much about this so would love to do some research on it. I feel that anyone can change - even throughout certain cultural biases and the more we stress the importance of outcomes with breastfeeding.
- I speak up for the recent immigrants from Central and South America who don't always have health insurance or the means to purchase breast pumps when needed or who may not have family support in their new location.
- All mothers deserve support, resources and community. There is strength in numbers and supporting everyone.
- **To give every baby the best start possible and change families for the better.**
- Unemployment is higher among women of color. There is no support or lack of support because nobody wants to go to a black neighborhood. Most can't breastfeed because they have to work.
- There's a lack of education for illegal immigrants which leads to early supplementation.
- **Healthy babies, healthy families.**
- Our community doesn't have a large African American population but rather Hispanic. I speak for them to become more involved. We offer Spanish classes but no attendance. The SIDS rate is rising among this population.
- Because of the rise in SIDS deaths in the Hispanic population.
- Because the people from our country are scared of or embarrassed by breastfeeding in public.
- Black babies are dying and breastfeeding can help. Hispanic and black families have social justice issues, poor health outcomes and less support to breastfeed which can make a difference.
- All women, no matter what race, should get the same information about the benefits of breastfeeding. They should especially be informed because of the risk to certain ethnic groups.
- We have over 19 different cultures which causes difficulty for follow ups on their infant care, feedings, etc. We need more programs to provide every mom and child proper care after delivery or education and information etc.
- **All moms, babies and families should have the same care and opportunities so they can have the best outcome and be successful in the future.**
- **Because I recognize the privileges, I have had that haven't been offered to others. It is my desire that ALL mothers have opportunity to give their families their best and get the respect they deserve as capable mothers. All children deserve health.**
- Because it is the right thing to do regardless of income, marital status, age or race to have the information to do what's best for them.
- **Women cannot be empowered and free until all women are empowered and free.** It's a human rights issue. Black women are dying at a rate 3 times higher. That's not okay.
- People of color have more challenges to meet the same breastfeeding goals as Caucasians. Family systems issues from the last 2 centuries affect this to some degree.
- I truly, deeply feel that every single life matters! God created us all for a purpose. Every mother and infant deserve our attention. They deserve a healthy start to life. African Americans, Native Americans, all ethnicities deserve the

health benefits that breastfeeding can provide. I am privileged - I need to use it to support mothers of color every chance I get!

- I'm confused by the question. This issue doesn't come up much for me simply demographically. It is not something I am confronted with very much. I have no personal perspective. I am interested in the idea of equity vs equality. It is of course important, I am often overwhelmed with guilt and sadness about the state of our country. Sometimes I am afraid to form an opinion on the matter. I don't feel like I am entitled to an opinion without personal history.
- Babies are our future and our future caregivers. They need the best and that includes being breastfed so one day they will be healthy caregivers.
- I want all moms to meet their breastfeeding goals.
- All children and families need to have equality and a voice no matter race, religion, ethnicity or job status.
- Quality childcare for all children. We have to value education from birth on, not just when they get into elementary school.
- Every life is precious. For some, there is a lack of education, support and ability to express one's self. Each person deserves the chance to make an informed decision and promote life long health.
- I care about babies whether they are mine or not. I want healing and beautiful experiences for all moms as a component of stability in families and self-efficacy.
- Inequity in breastfeeding among drug using women when they deliver at the hospital and a child is born with NAS.
- So all babies can benefit from the health benefits. This impacts health care costs for everyone.
- For the Native American community who often feel like an afterthought.
- Equal emotional support and access to education. Solutions to transportation and financial barriers.
- I believe EVERYONE deserves the opportunity to be successful and be a confident, contributing member of society.
- For optimal physical, mental and emotional health for ALL people of color.
- To decrease challenges and increase solutions.
- God creates all people in His image. Color of skin doesn't matter. Every baby needs human milk for the best outcome. Every momma needs breastfeeding for the best health outcome.
- I don't see racial inequity in my community. I speak up for equity in any form - for young mothers or mothers in poverty. All mothers should have equal opportunity to provide and give their babies the best they can.
- Every family is equal and has a right to the same counseling and guidance on their breastfeeding journey.
- Because I saw a need in my community for all women to get breastfeeding information and help and support so they can meet their breastfeeding goal.
- There is a lack of education and family support surrounding breastfeeding in the Hispanic culture. Many of the women I serve don't know the benefits of breastfeeding, or feel that they do not make enough milk for baby due to input from non-supportive family members. Their culture tells them to stop breastfeeding or supplement with formula when it's not necessary.
- Overall better health for mom and baby with the same standards of care.
- Every mom and baby matters no matter their race or ethnicity.
- Wichita zip code 67214 has poor health outcomes, including one of the worst infant mortality rates in the U.S. This is shameful because Wesley Hospital and Wichita State University surround it directly. All Wichitans need to be aware and care about this predominantly African American geographical area that illustrates KS disparity.

- All women should be provided the best educational support system to provide for her children and family.
- All women need to have the same support to be successful in breastfeeding through education of benefits, mentoring, etc. We need to meet people where they are at.
- Babies are dying. Moms are dying. Their lives matter. Everyone deserves to meet their breastfeeding goals. Everyone deserves the outcomes that happen with breastfeeding.
- Speaking up for and educating the black and Hispanic communities in a rural health care center could ensure continued breastfeeding in their future and postpartum.
- Because I believe in the importance of all families being able to make well educated informed decisions regarding the care of their children.
- Because having a solid support system matters. When the support varies it is more likely for people to stop trying. Meeting people where they are at as opposed to making general statements and assuming they will apply to all.
- I need to learn more about where the racial disparities exist in my community. I would guess that it aligns with the state of Kansas with rural disparities but I'm not sure. I would like our coalition to work towards having a more diverse membership, but I'm not sure how to go about that. Acknowledging privilege and using that privilege to support mothers.
- Spanish speakers in our community are the vast majority and don't even have the comfort of health care in their own language.
- Mothers are dying of disease due to lack of access to healthcare or disease risk reduction by breastfeeding.
- To lessen fears of reaching out for assistance and resources - especially in our current political climate - and to increase accessibility without judgement.
- Improved future outcomes in health, brain development and quality of community for everyone.
- The Hispanic population has low health outcomes for infants. With breastfeeding you improve the health outcome for the infant.
- When given the opportunity in my very rural community as a black BFPC it is satisfying to educate others on practices or lack thereof that imply racial inequity. Blacks and browns have many "things" that effect our breastfeeding outcomes compared to our non-black and brown sisters.
- Because I believe that all children need stronger attachment to their caregivers. This leads to better outcomes for them, the caregivers and world as a whole.