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INTRODUCTION

In order to support the implementation of the 2005 National Breastfeeding Strategy, the Health Promotion Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway has produced a comprehensive and definitive bibliography of published and unpublished studies and post-graduate theses related to infant feeding in Ireland.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this bibliography is twofold: to provide a platform for previous research and to identify research gaps and to reduce duplication of research. The bibliography will be indexed and searchable so as to enable it to form part of an eHealth library.

METHODOLOGY

A number of methods were used to source the reports included in this bibliography. Keyword searches for relevant research were made in the library catalogues and databases. A list was compiled of key informants in the infant feeding research area who were considered to have material to contribute to the bibliography. Those informants were contacted by letter and invited to send relevant material to the Health Promotion Research Centre for inclusion in the bibliography. Follow up e-mails and calls were made as necessary. Those who are known to have conducted research into infant feeding in Ireland, as identified by library searches and personal recommendation were contacted. Some informants suggested likely sources of material for inclusion which were pursued. All those contacted were also asked to further disseminate the invitation to submit.

A request for information about infant feeding related research conducted in Ireland appeared in the February 2008 newsletter of the Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland. This request also appeared in the newsletter of the Cuidiú-ICT Breastfeeding Counsellors and on the Cuidiú e-digest.

RESULTS

Preliminary investigations using library searches revealed a dearth of published infant feeding research and therefore the project relied on the willingness of relevant bodies and individuals to assist in obtaining copies of grey literature.

However, there are over 190 pieces of research in the bibliography, which includes: -

- Books/book chapters (n=3)
- Conference proceedings/abstracts (n=29)
- Government reports (n=10)
- Health Services reports (n= 34)
- Publications from International Organisations (n= 4)
- Non-Governmental reports (n=2)
- Non-peer-reviewed journals (n=16)
- Peer-reviewed journals (n=46)
- Reports from Research Units/ Academic Departments (n=9)
- Theses (n=39).

The dissemination format has been completed for each individual piece of research which includes the Full Citation, Publication status, Key Research Question(s), Study Design, Participant group(s), Study Conclusion(s), Key Words and Holding Status. The status of each piece of research has been documented in terms of public accessibility, length and subject matter and a hard and soft copy of each identified report has been procured where possible. The bibliography is to be indexed and searchable so as to form part of an eHealth library. The strengths of the Irish research base, and where gaps are found, will specify where there are total gaps or relative weaknesses. This work is ongoing.

CONCLUSIONS

Preliminary findings have shown a number of prominent gaps in infant feeding-related research that include the areas of breastfeeding mothers and babies being protected from discrimination in public places and mechanisms to enable hospital/community and volunteer breastfeeding support programmes to provide seamless, timely, co-ordinated, consistent, and comprehensive service to all mothers. In order to increase breastfeeding initiation and duration, further research on locally relevant approaches for improving breastfeeding promotion and support is required. This should include mother-to-mother support groups and peer counselors, especially given their documented success among disadvantaged population groups. The complete findings will be disseminated in due course. The research team would like to extend their gratitude to all that contributed and assisted in the search for infant feeding related research, both published and unpublished.

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REFERENCES

Available on request.