

Lactation Consultant Services celebrates 20 years in acute care

*submitted by
Brenda Corman, Lactation Consultant*

On June 1, 1990, a post partum nurse from St Paul's Hospital attended a one day breastfeeding workshop. She went home from that workshop and told her husband that after breastfeeding her own four children and having worked on a post partum unit for 19 years, she felt that she was lacking the education and tools to effectively help new breastfeeding mothers. "It was a very emotional realization," says Linda Wright. "I was inspired to improve care for our moms and babies."

Wright became an International Board Certification Lactation Consultant in 1991. She was committed to promote, protect and support breastfeeding. Her efforts led to St. Paul's Hospital developing a Breastfeeding Support Service: a first for Saskatchewan. "It was overwhelming and challenging. I knew I was being a change agent. Our culture needed a shift toward breastfeeding being the norm."

At the time, Saskatoon Health Region was also developing the "Healthy and Home" early discharge program. The continuum of care and breastfeeding support for new families in Saskatoon Health Region was improving.

Wright's first passion was to teach and support new mothers and families. It was evident that coworkers, doctors, support staff, and management also needed education. The World Health Organization/UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative and The 10 Steps to

Successful Breastfeeding became the template for staff and parent education.

Twenty years later, some significant changes have taken place. Wright describes the most influential change: "I remember a very noisy nursery filled with crying babies that had to wait for specific times to be taken to their mothers for feeding. We had very unhappy babies, frustrated mothers and low breastfeeding success rates. Today, our moms and babies room in together. Moms follow their baby's cues and build their breastfeeding skills and confidence."

There are two lactation consultants at RUH that share breastfeeding support coverage seven days a week. Their work is appreciated by those they assist. In the words of one mother, "She was thorough when she was teaching me how to nurse him. She just kind of talked me through it and I did everything. She showed me how to change his position. She showed me the things that made such a huge difference to getting him to learn the latch and for him and me to be comfortable. She held my hand, just by talking to me."

"Our work is focused on staff and family support and education that uses the BFI 10 steps as our guide to increase breastfeeding rates; a SHR goal. Healthy children make for healthy families and communities," adds Wright.



Linda Wright has been a registered nurse for 40 years and a lactation consultant for half that time.

To learn more about the Baby Friendly Initiative visit: <http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/bfhi/en/>.

*March 6, 2013
is International
Lactation
Consultant Day*