



**Around the Table in Ethiopia - A model of breastfeeding support for families of Babies born with cleft lip and/or palate**

Judy Norman, RN, MN, MPH, IBCLC, SIM Ethiopia,

Director of feeding and Lactation

Institution:

The Cure Hospital, PO Box 26134 Code 1000, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Work Phone #-251 (country code) (0) 111237767

Cell Phone #-251 (country code) (0) 913001288

Currently I am working as a missionary with SIM Ethiopia and am seconded to Cure Hospital. This hospital works with children born with birth defects primarily cleft lips and palates and club- feet and treats these poor patients free of charge courtesy of a grant from Smile Train. I have been in Ethiopia for 4 years and have worked at Cure Hospital for 2 years as the director of the feeding and lactation program. I work with children and their parents who are seen with feeding difficulties because of clefts and advocate breast milk feeding as much as possible. Around the Table in Ethiopia

**Abstract**

In the West there are often many sources of support when a child is born with a facial defect. This is true even when the child is unable to feed adequately because of palate or lip problems. However, in a developing country like Ethiopia when a child is unable to feed from his mother's breast there are few resources that a parent has and this child often dies. There are also problems of family shame and stigma associated with a deformed child as well as the high care needs required to keep this child alive. In some communities a cleft of the lip or palate is understood as a curse and such children are abandoned in the forest to be killed by wild animals or buried alive. Even in the capitol city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, there is little feeding support for children born with clefts so most children die before they can have palate reconstructive surgery. Most hospitals in this busy city recommend that children be fed formula via a naso-gastric feeding tube and this is the normal way that children born in hospitals present at Cure Hospital for feeding support. In this presentation I will describe our feeding program, which is constantly evolving at The Cure Hospital. The Cure Hospital is a United States funded pediatric mission hospital, which surgically corrects children with clefts, as well as deformities associated with hyena bites and Nomias. In this presentation, I will tell the stories of 5 of the families of children with clefts who we have treated this last year at Cure and weave in our plan of care during these stories. Most of this care takes place "around the table."