



Are epidurals prejudicial to breastfeeding initiation?

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Short biography

Professor-researcher in Nursing sciences in Québec and guest researcher at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm; Lead-assessor, BFHI program (WHO/UNICEF). Louise is recognized for her unfailing interest in any matter related to perinatal nursing, especially breastfeeding and evidence-based professional practices.

Do actual scientific evidences explain negative effects of epidurals during labor on the initiation of breastfeeding? Does epidural have negative effects on the woman's normal hormonal process in the postpartum period? The author will attempt to explain the state of the art on these questions, following an exhaustive review of the literature.

Abstract

We are more and more preoccupied by possible negative links between epidurals administered to mothers during labor and the initiation of breastfeeding. Obstetrical nurses note that babies born from mothers under epidural seem less interested by the breast than other babies. Moreover, these babies often show neurological behaviors leading to improper latch. Literature is controversial on this subject. Very often, evidences do not have common bases and in so, are hard to compare in order to demonstrate evidences. Evidences are also scarce on the role that epidurals may play on the normal maternal hormonal process in the postpartum period. As of today, what are the evidences on this subject?

Objectives of the presentation

At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to :

- Discuss scientific evidences actually available with regard to epidurals and their effects on the initiation of breastfeeding;
- Recognize missing data in the scientific literature pertaining to this subject;
- Explore consequences of higher rates of epidurals in industrialized countries and the possible effects on the efforts to increase breastfeeding initiation everywhere in the world as a public health measure.

Key words

epidural; breastfeeding initiation; scientific evidences; evidence-based practices