

Publication

Baby-friendly hospital designation has a sustained impact on continued breastfeeding

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The Baby-Friendly Hospital (BFH) Initiative has led to an increase in breastfeeding rates and duration worldwide. But little is known about whether the beneficial effects persist beyond a facility's designation as a BFH. To investigate the association of BFH designation (current, former, and never) and compliance with Baby-Friendly (BF) practices on breastfeeding in Switzerland, this study combined nationwide survey data on breastfeeding with BFH monitoring data. In this cross-sectional study, 1,326 children were born in 34 current (Nă=ă508), 28 former (Nă=ă425), and 34 never designated BFHs (Nă=ă393). We compared exclusive and any breastfeeding according to BFH designation over the first year of life, using Kaplan-Meyer Survival curves. Logistic regression models were applied to analyse breastfeeding prevalence, and Cox-regression models were used for exclusive (0-6ămonths) and continued (6-12ămonths) breastfeeding duration. Average duration of exclusive breastfeeding (13.1 ăweeks, 95% confidence interval [12.0, 17.4]) and any breastfeeding (32.7ăweeks, 95% confidence interval [30.5, 39.2]) were the longest for babies born in currently accredited BFHs. Exclusive breastfeeding was associated with high compliance with monitored BF practices in current BFHs and with the number of BF practices experienced in all hospitals. Continued breastfeeding was significantly longer when babies were born in current BFHs (cessation hazard ratio 0.60, 95% confidence interval [0.42, 0.84]) or in former BFHs (cessation hazard ratio 0.68, 95% confidence interval [0.48, 0.97]). Overall, the results support continued investment into BFHs, because babies born in current BFHs are breastfed the most and the longest, whereas a former BFH designation shows a sustained effect on continued breastfeeding.

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