Abstract

Objective: To describe the prevalence of and factors associated with pain experienced during breastfeeding and apply analysis results to improve training of breastfeeding peer counselors for the Wisconsin WIC program.

Methods: Survey results were analyzed from 2561 mothers who responded to monthly surveys from pregnancy until their child was 1 year old. Pain was reported using an NRS-11 scale. Multiple logistic regressions were used to examine the association between pain and breastfeeding duration. The Loving Support© Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Training Curriculum was reviewed for inclusion of material regarding pain during breastfeeding.

Results: Approximately 75% of mothers reported pain during breastfeeding. Moderate pain (NRS $\geq 4$) during breastfeeding was negatively associated with breastfeeding duration. Mothers who identified breast milk as their only feeding choice prior to delivery and mothers who received help from a health professional were less likely to experience pain during the first two weeks of breastfeeding. The Loving Support© Breastfeeding Peer Counselor training includes adequate references to pain. The NRS-11 scale can serve as a new tool to evaluate pain associated with breastfeeding.

Conclusions: The findings indicate that pain during breastfeeding negatively affects mothers’ ability to reach their breastfeeding goals. Early and continued professional support may be necessary to address these challenges and help mothers meet their desired breastfeeding duration.