

Submission for Workshop Abstract:

Kangaroo Mother Care and the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative: aligning and integrating implementation at country level for greater impact

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In 2017 and 2018, WHO published updated guidance on the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI). Currently both BFHI and Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) have low coverage globally and despite complementarity between the two initiatives, there are important gaps that need action. Greater emphasis on small and vulnerable infants is required in the BFHI, and KMC programs need to do more to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

To help address these gaps at the national and health facility levels, we reviewed the BFHI Ten Steps for Successful Breastfeeding for synergies with KMC and provide guidance on how each step could be implemented for stronger alignment and integration with KMC programs, based on KMC program and clinical guidelines and implementation experience.

The review showed that for each of the Ten Steps, there is synergy with KMC and opportunity for joint actions. E.g. Step 2 is to “ensure that staff have sufficient knowledge, competence and skills to support breastfeeding”, including helping a mother to breastfeed a LBW or sick baby. To implement this, joint training efforts (including planning, financing, assessment, follow-up) for facility staff on breastfeeding LBW and preterm infants could be more efficient and impactful than separate stand-alone trainings.

At the global and country level, this guidance on aligning and integrating BFHI and KMC implementation should inform efforts to introduce and scale up BFHI and KMC, and can also help ensure quality KMC, which includes exclusive breastfeeding wherever possible.