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Breast Milk Banks: The Situation in Turkey

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Nutrition during infancy plays an important role in ensuring healthy growth and development. Especially in the first 6 months of life, nutrition significantly reduces the burden of disease in children. According to the Turkey Demographic and Health Survey report, 41% of babies can be fed with breast milk alone for the first 6 months. The mother's use of drugs in the postpartum period, the presence of infection in the mother, the mother's substance use, the inability to breastfeed the baby for various reasons affect breastfeeding negatively. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that infants who cannot receive breast milk from their own mother take breast milk from another mother (donor milk) as an alternative. Therefore, in cases where the baby cannot be breastfed for some reason, the most appropriate feeding method is milk donation. Milk donation is provided by institutions that collect breast milk with medical techniques, protect it and deliver it to babies in need, and it is called breast milk bank in the literature. Efforts are being made to establish Turkish breast milk banks and this has brought along various discussions. Breast milk banking is not preferred in Turkey due to reasons such as not knowing the donor, lack of information about breast milk banking, mixing the collected breast milk, economic reasons, and milk brotherhood. Preventing prejudices and misconceptions about breast milk banks is important for improving newborn health. For this reason, all health personnel should be informed about breast milk bank and the lack of knowledge of the society about breast milk bank should be eliminated.

Biography

Esra KARATAŞ OKYAY has a research assistant in midwifery from Inonu University. She is working as a fulltime research assistant at midwifery department in İnönü University Faculty of Health Sciences.

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