Breast milk and child wellness

Prof Tony Westwood
Chairman: Provincial Clinical Governance Committee – Child Health
What does the shape of the province remind you of?

Clue: Imagine milk flowing down the red lines.
PGWC: The B(r)e(a)st provincial government in the world?
We cannot be ‘the best provincial government in the world’ if we are not committed to making breast milk the nutritional foundation of the health of our population
But it is not only about government......
“The Child is the Father of the Man” – or the Woman

i.e. how we look after children’s wellness determines what sort of adults they will be.

N.B.: children’s wellness is for children primarily (No ‘Brave New Province’ thinking allowed…..)
Breast milk and child and adult wellness in the Western Cape

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Chairman: Provincial Clinical Governance Committee – Child Health
Why breast milk? Why breast feeding?

✓ Gets the most balanced bodily growth*
✓ Gets the best protection against common childhood infections
✓ Gets the best mother/child relationship (the foundation of mental health) *
✓ Does not put money where the mouth is!
✓ Is good for the mother’s health and wellbeing (does she know this?) *
✓ Has life-long health benefits for the child (and therefore for society) *

* = link to other streams in this Summit
Why breast milk? Why breast feeding?

Child and adult wellness are built on breast milk and breast feeding.

What are the consequences of NOT building a solid foundation?

VERY EXPENSIVE
Why breast milk at this Summit?

- We have very poor exclusive breast feeding rates
- Improving breast feeding rates is associated with one of the best profiles for positive change in human health of any intervention
- This major benefit to children and society can be achieved at little cost
- There are well studied ways of improving breast feeding rates that are multi-interventional i.e. do lots of things at the same time to get the best results
- Effective intervention therefore involves us all: communities & civil society, elected representatives, most government departments, business, media

Tackling breast feeding rates is a good example of ‘upstream’ thinking
Why does breast milk involve us all?

• Promotion, protection and support require communities, media and businesses to be agents for change
• Sufficient change requires laws, regulations and policies to protect it:
• We need to understand dynamics with respect to breast feeding within households better – Higher Education and Research groups
Some examples

- Gender equity
- Maternity leave
- Marketing of formula milks
- Educating children about infant feeding
- “Free” formula and HIV
- Enabling breast feeding in public
- Pregnant female farm labourers
- Media images and messages
How are we to do this?

• We deliberate today
• We take Breast Milk Restoration as a lead theme to the afternoon session – and show how breast milk can
  – Reduce violence
  – Reduce non-communicable diseases
  – Prevent TB and HIV
  – Improve the health of women

Oh, and do wonders for the wellness of children!
Please join
The Breast milk Restoration Alliance
a.k.a.
The B.R.A.
Motto: “We support the Breast”
THE LAND OF (BREAST) MILK