

Breast milk versus Formula: What's the Big deal?

PICOT Question:

In newborns, how does breast fed infants compare to formula fed infants in their bilirubin levels in the first one to three weeks of life?

Abstract:

Breastfeeding versus formula feeding infants has long been a debate and question for parents. Many negative and positive points are brought up for each side of the debate, but an overwhelming majority of evidence has pushed for breastfeeding and its positive benefits for the newborn. However, there is a concern for the incidence of hyperbilirubinemia in infants and whether breastfeeding or formula feeding affects bilirubin levels. The aim of this project is to gather evidence to determine whether or not bilirubin levels in newborns are significantly influenced in the first one to three weeks of life by source of feeding, either breast feeding or formula feeding. Our evidence was gathered from the following accessed databases: Medline, Proquest, and CINAHL. Our findings did suggest that bilirubin levels are higher in breastfed newborns in the first week to three weeks of life, but the positive benefits of breastfeeding out weighted the cons; however, great caution should be taken to monitor the levels of bilirubin in all infants due to the risk of hyperbilirubinemia causing neurological harm, such as brain damage. Therefore, nurses and all medical professionals working with infants should practice effective monitoring of bilirubin levels in newborns to effectively intervene when bilirubin levels reach a dangerous level and provide sufficient education to the parents.

Key Words:

Bilirubin, Hyperbilirubin, formula fed, breast fed, newborn, infant, breastmilk