Patterns of breastfeeding at 3 months postpartum in the Alberta Pregnancy Outcomes and Nutrition (APRON) study

Background
Infant feeding is often characterised in broad categories, such as exclusive breastfeeding, partial breastfeeding and formula feeding. However, there is little information about detailed patterns of feeding within these groups. The purpose of this study was to examine patterns of breastfeeding from 3 days postpartum.

Methods
The APRON study is a prospective study of women during pregnancy and their children. At 3 months postpartum women completed a prospective breastfeeding diary which collected information on the number of feeds, and duration and method of every feed over 3 days. A total of 1080 women completed the breastfeeding diaries.

Results
Women reported feeding their babies using combinations of up to 4 different methods (at breast, expressed breastmilk in a bottle, formula breastmilk and formula in the same bottle) in any one day. For the ongoing analyses women were categorised into 4 groups based on the number and type of feeds reported/day: 1) at breast only (n=622), 2) at breast and expressed breastmilk (n=223), 3) mixed feeding using 2 methods (n=123) and, 4) mixed feeding using 3 or 4 methods (n=112). The proportion of total feeds at breast was 80%, 75% and 64% for the mothers in the ‘at breast only’, ‘mixed feeding using 2 methods’ and ‘mixed feeding of 3 using 4 methods’ groups, respectively. In turn the average daily duration of at breast feeds was longer in women who fed at breast only compared to those in any other method group. Women who fed ‘at breast and expressed milk’, ‘mixed feeding using 2 methods’ and ‘mixed feeding of 3 or 4 methods’ fed, on average, for 18 min, 17 min and 27 min less at breast per day, respectively, compared to women who fed at breast only (all p<0.01). There were no differences in the average number of daily feeds between the 4 method groups.

Discussion
Exposure to adversities in childhood and low SES in adulthood were associated with work disability. Exposure to both these risk factors was associated with the highest work disability risk, although this was additive rather than synergistic effect. Childhood adversity was associated with disability due to mental disorders in particular, whereas low adult SES was more strongly associated with disability due to musculoskeletal disorders.

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