

Section: EXTENSION PROJECT REPORT

Abstract: EXT-03

The 'Amor sem fórmula' extension project and the democratization of breastfeeding: an experience report

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INTRODUCTION: Breastfeeding is important for maternal and child health. Breast milk is the ideal source of nutrition, and exclusive breastfeeding through six months of age followed by complementary breastfeeding through two years is associated with reduced infant morbidity and mortality and a lower risk of chronic diseases in adulthood. Despite improving breastfeeding rates in Brazil, only 45.7% of infants are exclusively breastfed at six months. The Amor sem Fórmula project was therefore created to connect trained medical students with pregnant and postpartum women attending primary care units (Unidades Básicas de Saúde [UBS]) and provide support and counseling. **EXPERIENCE REPORT:** The project included six training sessions with pediatricians, speech-language therapists, and nutritionists, combining technical guidance and experiences related to breastfeeding. Practical preparation for three activities at primary care units, three at hospitals, and other practice settings also included two simulations reflecting the questions and concerns that mothers might share during their encounters with students. This preparation enabled students to plan, recognize the community's circumstances, and understand the importance of qualified listening, welcoming care, and respect. **DISCUSSION:** During the extension project, students independently applied the knowledge acquired at every stage of the prior training provided by healthcare professionals. Direct contact with patients and firsthand exposure to their difficulties also helped students develop fundamental attributes for medical training, including empathy and the ability to share knowledge with the community. It is also essential to highlight the importance of this type of project as a new way to educate and prepare students for future medical practice by broadening their experience beyond the basic academic curriculum. In conclusion, the extension project gave students valuable academic and social experience because they had the opportunity to fulfill their social role as health sciences students: bringing essential knowledge to the population to improve public health in both the short and long term.

KEYWORDS: Breastfeeding; Pregnant women; Welcoming care; Community action.