



USLCA
United States Lactation
Consultant Association

March 19, 2009

Editorial Department
The Atlantic Monthly
600 New Hampshire Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037

RE: "The Case Against Breastfeeding" by Hanna Rosin – April 2009

Dear Editors:

The International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), the professional association for thousands of International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) across the world, along with our national affiliate, the United States Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA), would like to express our profound disappointment over the article, "The Case Against Breastfeeding," published in the April 2009 edition of *The Atlantic*.

The article presents an inaccurate interpretation of a handful of older studies by a journalist without qualifications for interpreting and analyzing complicated research data. It also ignores both the exhaustive body of newer research and the national and international policies and recommendations, from NGOs, national governments and medical organizations that are based on that compelling research.

Ignored was the comprehensive report from the Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which screened 9,000 studies in developed countries to conduct a meta-analysis of the health impact of breastfeeding on both women and infants. This 2007 report found a reduced risk in infants of: acute otitis media, atopic dermatitis, gastrointestinal infections, lower respiratory tract disease, asthma, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, childhood leukemia, and SIDS. Mothers who breastfeed had a reduced risk of Type 2 diabetes, breast cancer, and ovarian cancer. The report is available on-line at www.ahrq.gov/downloads/pub/evidence/pdf/brfout/brfout.pdf

ILCA/USLCA feel *The Atlantic's* choice to print a one-sided, incorrect portrayal of research without consulting true experts in the field is irresponsible at best. Of greater concern is the potential for harmful ramifications, especially among vulnerable populations of women who typically breastfeed at much lower rates than the general population. The significant disparities in health have caused medical and public health organizations and governments across the world to establish goals for breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity. Examples include the HHS Healthy People 2010 goals, the U.S. Surgeon General's "Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding," and the World Health Organization's *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding*.

The author's portrayal of the difficulties of breastfeeding points to the need for a society that truly values breastfeeding and provides support at every level of a woman's life. Lactation consultants are among the many resources for support and accurate, evidence-based information, offering help and assistance to help mothers reach their breastfeeding goals. ILCA's "Find a Lactation Consultant Directory" at www.ilca.org makes it easy for any mother to find an IBCLC in her community.

Sincerely, on behalf of their Boards of Directors,

Angela Smith, President,
International Lactation Consultant Association

Glenda Dickerson, President,
United States Lactation Consultant Association

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