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Support for breastfeeding physicians

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To the Editor:

With interest, we read the commentary by Pesch et al on the need for pediatricians to support their fellow breastfeeding colleagues.¹ The American Academy of Pediatrics currently is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to address improvements in breastfeeding-related physician education and training. As part of this project, the American Academy of Pediatrics, with input from representatives of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and multiple other stakeholder organizations on the Project Advisory Committee developed the “Physician Education and Training on Breastfeeding Action Plan.”² A key component of that plan is support for the breastfeeding physician. The plan included support for the revision of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine’s statement on breastfeeding-related educational objectives and skills needed for physicians, which includes a statement of support for breastfeeding medical students, residents, faculty, and staff.³ In addition, the American Academy of Family Physicians is leading efforts towards drafting a model policy describing how institutions can support their medical trainees (students, residents, and fellows). Finally, the Project Advisory Committee is in the process of developing a plan to create a culture of support for breastfeeding within the medical community that

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will emphasize support for breastfeeding physicians as a component of wellness. We agree with the authors' conclusion that there is a need to support the breastfeeding physician. As the proportion of women physicians increases,⁴ with a majority being of reproductive age, creating environments that support breastfeeding physicians may help them meet their personal breastfeeding goals,⁵ improve their health and that of their own children,^{6, 7} and enhance their skills at providing breastfeeding care to their patients.^{5, 8} Breastfeeding physicians, as with all women who choose to breastfeed, need supportive environments to make breastfeeding a success.

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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Information about this work has been published elsewhere, including the Action Plan, and a brief mention of the work specific to breastfeeding physicians (eg, the model policy, plan for culture of support) has been mentioned in other presentations (eg, the American Academy of Pediatrics 2018 National Conference and Exhibition).

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