

## **Winnie Mading May 17, 2005 Summary**

**"Effects of birthing practices on breastfeeding" The physiological aspects and the psychological and emotional effects on the mother/baby relationship.**

There are many studies on effects of various birth interventions on baby and mother. There are many studies on various aspects of breastfeeding. However, too few take into consideration the fact that birth and lactation are a continuum, not two separate occurrences. For example, potential effects of labor pain meds on babies are brushed off as "only lasting a few days" totally overlooking the fact that that is just the critical time when mom and baby are getting started at breastfeeding.

It's not just labor meds that can have an impact. For example, presence of a labor support person can have a positive impact on how mothers perceive themselves and their baby long after the birth. Perineal pain can affect how a mother nurses in the first few days. Catecholamine levels in colostrum differ between vaginal and C/S births. Catecholamine plays an important part in infant's adjustment to extrauterine life.

Often a mother approaches labor and delivery with a positive self esteem and trust in her body. With each intervention, she may question her body, her ability to understand herself and her ability to know what her baby needs. This cascade of interventions and subsequent impact on her confidence in breastfeeding can have a negative impact on her breastfeeding "success". As LCs we need to understand these effects, even when intervention has been appropriate. A birth history needs to be part of our assessment and we need to understand how birth experiences may play a part when there are breastfeeding challenges.