**The Milk Sharing Conundrum - The Grey Area Between Scope and Need**

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**Overview:**

All human babies have the right to breastmilk exclusivity. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways - exclusive feeding at the mother’s breast, exclusive mother’s expressed breastmilk delivered to the baby via a feeding device, or pasteurized donor human milk delivered via a feeding device. However, there has been much attention placed on the traditional, though much frowned upon, practice of informal milk sharing. Milk sharing is when women provide breastmilk directly to another family in need, without going through the donor milk bank process.  The increasing popularity of milk sharing via social media, the growing attention on the importance of breastmilk exclusivity, the increasing awareness of the failing and potential dangers of artificial milk, and the inability for donor milk banks to provide donor milk for more than those in critical need has led professionals and families to an impass. While peer to peer milk sharing is gaining popularity among families, finding policy and recommended practices can be difficult. The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine only references mothers own expressed milk, donor human milk, or hydrolyzed or standard infant formulas for breastmilk feeding in regards to supplemental feeds. The World Health Organization, states in its Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, “for those few health situations where infants cannot, or should not, be breastfed, the choice of the best alternative – expressed breast milk from an infant’s own mother, breast milk from a healthy wet-nurse or a human-milk bank, or a breastmilk substitute…depends on individual circumstance.” Most milk share organizations recommend the practice of using The Four Pillars of Safe Milk Sharing. These are informed choice, donor screening, safe handling, and home pasteurization. This presentation will cover in detail the myriad of concerns of professionals, the information all families need to know about milksharing, milk sharing and social media, and lactation professional's scope of practice issues in regards to this phenomenon.

**Questions:**

[www.motherjourney.com](http://www.motherjourney.com) , [info@motherjourney.com](mailto:info@motherjourney.com)

**Resources:**

Milk Sharing/Donor Websites:

Human Milk Banking Association of North America <http://hm4hb.net/>

Eats on Feets <http://www.eatsonfeets.org/>

Milkshare <http://milkshare.birthingforlife.com/>

Milkin Mamas (Prolacta) <http://www.milkinmamas.com>

Helpin Hands (Prolacta) <http://helpinghandsbank.com/>

National Milk Bank (Prolacta) <http://www.nationalmilkbank.org/>

Human Milk for Human Babies <http://hm4hb.net/>

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