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Dr. Flaherman's clinical research program has focused on improving breastfeeding duration for mother-infant dyads who initiate breastfeeding, with specific attention to those facing initial barriers to breastfeeding such as poor infant latch or suck or delayed onset of maternal milk production.

The impact of breast milk expression on maternal experience

Breast milk expression is common among breastfeeding mothers, especially in the first few months after birth.

Milk expression can be practiced either using a breast pump or by hand, and may be practiced by a mother for a variety of indications: to increase her milk production, to feed the infant herself without direct breastfeeding, or allow others to feed the infant when she and the infant are separated by work, school, illness or other factors.

The method of milk expression and the indication for expressing may have a substantial impact on a mother's overall breastfeeding experience, which in turn may have an important effect on breastfeeding duration. This presentation will explore the evidence base describing the impact of milk expression on maternal experience during breastfeeding, and will review the scientific literature on the relationship between maternal milk experience and overall breastfeeding duration.

New findings regarding both positive and negative impacts of milk expression on breastfeeding duration highlight the need for additional research to assess maternal experience of milk expression using tools such as the Breast Milk Expression Experience (BMEE) measure.

By tailoring milk expression techniques to optimize maternal experience, it may be possible to allow more mothers to achieve their own individual breastfeeding goals and potentially reduce racial, ethnic and geographic disparities in breast milk provision, thereby improving the health and development of infant populations worldwide.