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For immediate release

Breastfeeding Protects Mother and Child from Cardiovascular Disease

Morrisville, NC- The United States Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) would like to join the American Heart Association recognizing February as heart healthy month and February 5 as wear Red Day. Wear Red day is in recognition of support in the fight against heart disease. In honor of this day the USLCA would like to draw attention to women on the benefits of breastfeeding and the reduction of heart disease in the mother and baby. In a recent study, women who reported a lifetime history of breastfeeding for 12 months or more, were less likely to have postmenopausal cardiovascular disease. This study was conducted on 139,681 women who voluntarily participated in The Women's Health Initiative at the University of Pittsburgh. The women ranged in age from 50 to 79 years of age. In this study, prolonged lactation of at least 12 months has been shown to improve a woman's glucose level, reduce metabolic disorder, obesity, hypertension and diabetes. This information is significant because the women who were studied had at least 30 years since they last breastfed and the protection was still prevalent. The importance of this information transcends all women regardless of age, parity, socioeconomic background, and education.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death of women in the United States. The American Heart Association reports that in the United States 1 in 4 women die of heart disease each year. The U.S Department of Health also reports that in 2004, 60% of all women who died did so because of heart disease and not cancer, which is what most people believe. Although these studies show the importance of breastfeeding for the health of women, The American Heart Association also states that there are heart health benefits for the babies as well.

The American Heart Association reports in their Scientific Sessions of 2007 that children who are breastfed "are less likely to have certain cardiovascular disease risk factors in adulthood than their formula fed counterparts". It appears that children who are breastfed have lower BMI (Body Mass Index) and a higher amount of the "good cholesterol". This good cholesterol helps protect breastfed children as adults from cardiovascular disease.

USLCA president, Laurie Beck, RN, MSN, IBCLC supports The American Heart Association and asks that on February 5th the United States Lactation Consultants wear red and educate women on the importance of breastfeeding and the reduction on heart disease in women and children. “This type of united support can help educate and support breastfeeding in hospitals and the community” says Beck.

Knowledgeable professional breastfeeding support can be obtained from lactation consultants with the IBCLC credential (International Board Certified Lactation Consultant). To locate an IBCLC for assistance with breastfeeding go to <http://www.uslca.org>.