

The AAP California Chapter 2 sent out a call for abstracts on scholarly projects by pediatric residents and medicine-pediatric residents from CHLA, Harbor-UCLA, Kaiser LA, Loma Linda, UCLA and USC; and medical students from the Southern California counties of Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura. The accepted abstracts were showcased at the 2021 Virtual Advances in Pediatrics Virtual Symposium.

**We are thrilled to share with you one author and their abstract each month.**



**UCR is to become the Milk Depot  
(UCR Women's Health Center)**  
and we have partnered with  
**UC Health Milk Bank (SD Blood Bank)**  
as of May 2020



Sonul Gupta

Abstract Awardee - Oral Presentation:

**Sonul Gupta, Third-Year Medical Student**

UC Riverside School of Medicine

*Understanding the Motives of Donors for a Student-Run Breast Milk Bank*



Sonul Gupta is a third-year MD candidate at the University of California Riverside School of Medicine, currently investigating what breastfeeding mothers desire as incentives for breast milk donation in the Inland Empire. She is also leading a group of students to create the first breast milk depot and milk bank for the region. Among these interests, Sonul is an avid board member of the student-run Healthcare Leadership Designated Emphasis at UCR, and is leading a PDSA project with Unicare CHC Women's Health. In her free time, Sonul enjoys dancing, gardening and spending time with friends and family. Prior to medical school, she obtained her B.S. in Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology from UCLA. Upon graduation, Sonul plans to pursue a career in Obstetrics & Gynecology and continue her passion for improving maternal, fetal and reproductive health. Please contact at: [sonul.gupta@medsch.ucr.edu](mailto:sonul.gupta@medsch.ucr.edu)

## Understanding the Motives of Donors for a Student-Run Breast Milk Bank

**Sonul Gupta** (UCR); Jordan Smith (UCR); Somya Maheshwari (UCR); Priya Rajan (UCR); Natalie Albasha (UCR)

Studies have shown that exclusive breastfeeding can reduce the risk of developing necrotizing enterocolitis significantly in preterm infants in the NICU.<sup>[1]</sup> When a mother's own milk is unavailable, donor breast milk (DBM) is the next best option. Southern California is an underserved area for affordable DBM access. Interviews with NICU clinicians indicate that DBM is expensive, with the median cost around \$8.50/ounce. This high cost stems from associated screening, processing, and cold-storage shipping from the nearest milk bank. To address this problem, we are creating a human milk bank in the Inland Empire, which would reduce the geographic scarcity of DBM and increase accessibility for local infants in need.

An important component in fostering breast milk donation is understanding the donor herself. A recent study stated that mothers' motivations derive predominantly from altruism, whereas the biggest barrier to donating breast milk stems from cultural and religious beliefs.<sup>[2]</sup> The current study is cross-sectional and utilizes a novel online survey instrument. The primary aim is to understand donors' motivations and build a tangible support system for breastfeeding mothers, young infants and their families. Through achieving this, we hope to increase the quantity of donations, provide culturally responsive care, and promote a culture of breast milk donation in southern California.

Survey participants are mothers with infants up to 18 months of age. Mothers have been recruited through personal networks, referrals, social media, and local OB/GYN and pediatrics clinics. Participants interact with an online survey via Qualtrics and responses remain anonymous. Responses are tabulated by zip code, age, births, breastfeeding experience, and production. Participants' motivations for donation are assessed by both free response and multiple choice, with drop-down options informed by previous studies.

Preliminary results from 75 women show that the most commonly selected factors for donation (approximately 65% of responders) include gaining access to lactation consultants, mental health resources, and a community of breastfeeding mothers, which are services that can be provided by milk banks. Only a quarter of responders disclosed that receiving information about infants positively impacted by their donations is important, affirming that altruism is a motive but not the most common one. Approximately 20% of participants indicated that monetary compensation was their primary motive. And separately, 60% of individuals stated that they know other women who would be interested in donating.

Altruism has been thought of as the primary motivating factor for donating breast milk, yet our survey suggests that other factors may be at play and that breast milk donors in the Inland Empire may be poorly understood. These results also demonstrate that potential donors have access to a sizeable network of breastfeeding mothers, which could serve to significantly increase DBM availability in this area. With 6 months left of the study, we expect to hit our target goal of 250 survey responses. Through developing a greater understanding of the motivations for breastmilk donation within the Inland Empire, infants in need could receive DBM as the standard of care, while promoting ethical incentive programs for breastfeeding mothers.

## References:

- [1] Herrmann, Kenneth, and Katherine Carroll. "An exclusively human milk diet reduces necrotizing enterocolitis." *Breastfeeding medicine: the official journal of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine* vol. 9,4 (2014): 184-90. doi:10.1089/bfm.2013.012
- [2] Doshmangir, Leila, et al. "Factors Influencing Donations to Human Milk Bank: A Systematic Review of Facilitators and Barriers." *Breastfeeding Medicine*, vol. 14, no. 5, 2019, pp. 298–306., doi:10.1089/bfm.2019.0002.

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