

Celebrating World Breastfeeding Week 2008 in Paraguay

I would like to share with you our World Breastfeeding Week activities in Paraguay this year. 4 organizations in Paraguay joined forces to organize and coordinate activities for World Breastfeeding Week 2008. They are:

- i. Breastfeeding Committee of the Hospital Materno Infantil “Reina Sofia” de la Cruz Roja Paraguay (Hospital Cruz Roja - HCR),
- ii. Breastfeeding Committee of Sociedad Paraguaya de Pediatria (Paraguayan Pediatric Society- SPP)
- iii. Parhupar
- iv. La Liga de Leche Materna del Paraguay (LLLPY)

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, MSBS of Paraguay supported in the planning of the activities.

These organizations individually protect, promote and support breastfeeding in their organizations. Throughout the year, representatives of these organizations come together at meetings usually at the Hospital Cruz Roja to discuss, share experiences and support each other in their breastfeeding work. It is flexible and friendly group. This year thanks to Dr. Marta Gamarra, the coordinator of the Breastfeeding Committee of the Paraguayan Pediatric Society, we met every Thursday for more than a month at the Paraguayan Pediatric Society. The Red Cross Hospital’s breastfeeding committee is another group that met quite often during the month to plan activities for the hospital for the week as well.



The first three photos were taken at the Pediatric Society. The 4th. Photo shows Dr. Mireya Ramirez, a retired paediatrician and full time volunteer at the hospital and Dr. Amanda Peña holding up the Virgin of La Leche, an oil painting that Dr. Mireya’s daughter got for her from Lima, Peru.

Each group took responsibility of organizing certain activities. In some of the events, I have added a personal note.

a. Breastfeeding Awareness and WBW Talk - 24th. July 2008, Thursday, 9.00-10.00am, Neonatology Auditorium, Hospital Cruz Roja. 5th and 6th grade students from different schools came to visit the Red Cross Hospital at the invitation of Dr. Amanda Peña, a pediatrician. The teachers from Perpetuo Socorro requested particularly for a talk on breastfeeding. Since the hospital staff was busy, I invited the students to the auditorium for a talk. The students were full of questions. A new volunteer, Adriana Cubas, a mother of twins gave some insights on breastfeeding twins. Adrianna, Bella de Petersen, a Red Cross volunteer at the hospital and I answered many of the students’ questions which ranged from reproductive organs, birth and breastfeeding. There were more than 40 students and at the end of the talk, the students hugged each one of us. Unfortunately no photos were taken at this talk.

b. Mother Support Group - 1st. August, 2008, Friday, 9.00-11.00am, Pelopincho Community Center. Parhupar meets at Pelopincho every Friday. Parhupar under Pili Peña, Coordinator has been working in Pelopincho since 2005. Many mothers thanks to the support group here breastfeed their babies. They have been part of projects which emphasize on healthy pregnancy, birth and optimal care of the infant and child. This year, the first day of WBW coincided with the graduation of participants of a one year project by Parhupar: *Construyendo Una Comunidad Emprendedora con Madres Capaces, Niños/as Sanos y Felices* (Building an Enterprising Community with Capable Mothers, Children who are Happy and Healthy). The ceremony was attended by project participants (mothers, grandmothers), babies, children, teachers, representatives from the Ministry of Education, Municipality, Art School, Soroptomist International. The importance of WBW and its theme was introduced including the fact that their community (photo and sayings from a community member) was featured in the 2008 WBW action folder. Each one received a WBW poster with their graduation kit.



c. Launching of World Breastfeeding Week 2008 - 1st. August 2008, Friday, 10.30-12.00, Auditorium, Hospital Cruz Roja. Dr. Marta Bareiro, Representative of the Organizing Committee, spoke on the WBW theme of support and breastfeeding support in the hospital. Dr. Ruben Dario Ortiz, Director General of the Health Programmes of the MSBS also spoke on the ministries' efforts to promote breastfeeding. The late Dr. Roque Griffith, Gynaecologist and Obstetrician at the HCR was awarded posthumously for his efforts in promoting breastfeeding. His wife received the award. Dr. José Tomas Negrete, Medical Director of the HCR spoke on *Breastfeeding – Valid Reasons to Breastfeed*. The event came to an end with a reception. The event was reported in the newspapers.



d. Caminata Blanca Saturday, 2nd, August, 2008, 9-11.30am – Parque de Salud del IPS (Instituto Prevision Social)Health Park. The Park was decorated with breastfeeding posters and drawings by children of Pelopincho. A stand was set up to sell breastfeeding posters, T-shirts, cards, calendars and pins promoting WABA and the WBW. Volunteers spoke to guests and students on breastfeeding. Fruits and drinks and service for taking the blood pressure was available to all. The event started with speeches by Pili Peña, coordinator of Parhupar and Dr. Marta Gamarra, coordinator of the Breastfeeding committee of SPP. Cyntia Leon, Parhupar and LLLPY leader spoke on the advantages of breastfeeding. The talk was illustrated using cloth posters, a project by LLLPY, Ministry of Health and sponsored by UNICEF. Dr. Teresa Leon, former Minister of Health and current Director of Preventive Medicine at IPS gave out information on advantages of breastfeeding and the differences in the composition of breastmilk and cow's milk. White balloons (signifying milk) were released. **A TV channel and newspapers covered the event.** Dr. Marta Gamarra was interviewed and news of the event was later shown on TV.



e. Breastfeeding Support and Talk, 2nd, August, 2008, Saturday, 10.00 – 11.00am, Community Health Center of Katuete, Canindeyu. Parhupar member Pamela Sanchez organized a support group meeting to celebrate WBW meet attended by mothers and babies and the health staff.



* Photos by Pamela Sanchez

f. Breastfeeding Talk for Families, 4th. August, 2008, Monday, 8.30-9.30am, Centro de Salud No. 9, Asuncion. Many families attended the event: mothers, babies, fathers, relatives and health staff. Dr. Elba Escalada, senior paediatrician, spoke on the *Main Difficulties encountered in Breastfeeding*. Dr. Marta Gamarra spoke on the WBW theme and encouraged questions. Many questions were asked and answered. There was also a photo exhibition on breastfeeding dyad. The session ended with lucky draws, and food and drinks served.



g. Club de Madres, 5th. August, 2008, Tuesday, 8.30 – 10.30am, Pediatric Department, Hospital Cruz Roja. The Club de Madres (Mothers Club) started in July 2007, meets every first Tuesday of the month, facilitated by Cyntia Leon, LLL Leaders, Dr. Mireya, Dr. Amanda and senior nurse like Maria Luisa and volunteers. The Club celebrated its first anniversary in July 2008.

For our August meet, many mothers, fathers, family members were present. Cyntia spoke on the advantages of breastfeeding. Dr. Amanada Peña, Dr. Mireya and Lic. Maria Luisa Pastor shared their experiences as well. Christian, a supportive breastfeeding father, a regular at the club meetings, shared his decision on how he stopped smoking and shares in the caring of his baby. Many mothers, fathers and grandparents also shared their experiences. TV channel interviewed the doctors and volunteers.

This club started after the hospital breastfeeding committee (doctors, nurses, sociologist, volunteers – Red Cross and LLL) had been in existence for quite sometime. The members of the committee meet once a month and discuss breastfeeding in the hospital and how to improve the situation. When a mothers' club that meets once a month was suggested, support from the hospital staff was available. At our last meeting(7th. October), mothers who had attended more than one meetings came. A pregnant woman who had heard about the club and come as her previous childbirth was 13 years ago. What is really important is that mothers share their experiences and the health staff listens. There is a lot of respect in the group.



h. Breastfeeding Conference, 5th. August, 2008, Tuesday, 11.00 -12.00, Universidad Catolica de Asuncion (The Catholic University of Asuncion), Auditorium. Dr. Marta Gamarra de Godoy gave a conference talk on *Why it is worth Breastfeeding* and Prof. Dra. Ilbe Palacio de Franco spoke on *Breastfeeding and LAM*. The 6th year medical students displayed their research and studies on breastfeeding via posters. Breastfeeding is an integral part of the medical syllabus at this University and a study on LAM is in process with women of low economic status.



The first photo is of Dr. Marta Gamarra and the first photo in the second row is Dr. Marta with her students.

i. Mother Support Group, 6th. August, 2008, Wednesday, 8.30- 9.30am, Reception Hall, Hospital Barrio Obrero. This is the first hospital where I started to volunteer in 2001. It is close to my house. Lic. Lydia Aquino, a senior hospital staff at the Health Centre of the Hospital is very pro-breastfeeding. When she was in-charge at the maternity side of the hospital, there was a lot of

support for breastfeeding. This year as in previous years, Lydia spoke to mothers on breastfeeding and its advantages. Both of us introduced the WBW and its theme to mothers and babies. Mothers asked questions on breastfeeding and became aware of the importance of receiving and giving support for a successful breastfeeding experience.



j. Support for the Breastfeeding Mother,, 6th. August, 2008, Wednesday, 10.00-11.30, Auditorium, Health Center Hospital Barrio Obrero. Mothers of newborn babies, still hospitalised, other mothers with their young children, health staff, volunteers, members of the organizing committee attended this session. Lic. Nelli, head of the nursing staff and Lic. Sonia, the head nurse of the maternity section of the hospital spoke on the breastfeeding theme. Posters on breastfeeding by student nurses were displayed on the wall as was the cloth posters on breastfeeding. **The mothers were interviewed by the TV channel.** There was a lucky draw and food and drinks were served to the mothers and those present.



In this last photo you will see Dr. Rolon, pediatrician who is extremely supportive of breastfeeding. Unfortunately he does not get the support needed being overworked as most of the hospital staff in the country.

k. LLLPY Support Group Meeting, 6th. August, 2008, Wednesday, 5.00-7.00pm, San Cristobal, Asuncion. LLL Support group meets every first Wednesday of the month in Lily de Veron, LLL Leader's house. WBW theme was introduced during the course of the meeting. Those present shared their breastfeeding experiences and the women who were expecting had many questions. There was also a father to be present anxiously waiting for the birth of their first born. Here in the first photos, you will see standing near the door, LLL Leaders Elizabeth Gavilan, and on her right, Lily de Veron.



This last photo from left, Cyntia Leon, Dr. Mireya, Pushpa and Ana Lucia.

l. WBW Closing Ceremony, 7th. August, 2008, Thursday 10.30-12.00, Auditorium, Hospital Cruz Roja. At the closing ceremony, Hospital Cruz Roja was recertified as Baby and Mother Friendly Hospital by the Ministry of Health, PAHO and UNICEF. The event was organized by the Ministry of Health. The speakers were Sandra Recalde who heads the Breastfeeding Program of the Ministry, Dr. Oscar Martinez, Minister of Health, Carlos Mazuera, UNICEF Representative, Prof. Dr. Carlos Vera U. Director of Cruz Roja Paraguaya and Dr. Jose Negrete, Medical Director of the Hospital. Various representatives of organizations supporting mothers received a bag pack with 10 cloth posters on breastfeeding. It is a didactic tool in breastfeeding promotion and education. The breastfeeding committee of the hospital also took this opportunity to inaugurate a place for mothers of newborns hospitalized at the hospital.



m. Breastfeeding talks at the Hospital Cruz Roja by Students, 1st-7th. August, 2008, 8.00-10.00am, At the entrance of Hospital Cruz Roja students from Colegio Vice Presidente Sanchez of Tecnico de Salud (Health Stream) and nursing students from the Instituto Andres Barbero, National University, spoke to mothers with babies, pregnant women on breastfeeding. They also distributed pamphlets on breastfeeding. They also spoke to mothers at the maternity and prenatal wards.



n. Breastfeeding Art Contest, 1-7th. August, 3rd. October, 2008. 5th and 6th. Graders from 6 primary schools from the neighbourhood area of the Hospital Cruz Roja and Hospital Barrio Obrero participated in the contest. The teachers from selected classes in these schools spoke to their students on breastfeeding following which the children drew pictures of breastfeeding art. This took place during the WBW week, 1-7st. August at different times. All the artwork was collected and returned to the Hospital Cruz Roja where the organizing committee selected the winners. 3 Prizes per school were given to students for the best work, not based on the best art but the best message that came across on breastfeeding. The closing ceremony took place on the **3rd. October, 2008** at the Auditorium at the Hospital Cruz Roja. The delay in the prize giving was due to various unforeseen reasons. A personal invitation was given to each of these schools. The breastfeeding art was displayed at the entrance of the auditorium. Dr. Amanda Peña and Dr. Marta Bareiro spoke on the importance of supporting breastfeeding and educating children on breastfeeding at schools. Each school received a Diploma each and WBW message in Guarani. Colegio Vice Presidente Sanchez and the Nursing Institute(Instituto Andres Barbero) received a diploma and the Womanly Art of Breastfeeding book for their library. After the award giving, children from these schools performed: traditional folk dances, one read an essay on breastfeeding in Guarani and another played the violin. An invited guest who played the violin was Elena Vazquez, Pili Peña's daughter. Food and drinks were served.



Newspapers carried events of the Breastfeeding Week activities and also reported certain activities. 26th July, 2008, Radio Ñanduti interview of Dr. Mireya on the importance of breastfeeding and WBW activities.

30th. July, 2008, Telefuturo, Morning programme, Dr. Marta Bareiro of Hospital Cruz Roja and Dr. Mercedes Portillo of the Ministry of Health were interviewed on breastfeeding.

8th. August, 2008, Canal 2, Dr. Amanda, Hospital Cruz Roja and Pili Peña, Parhupar and LLLLeader were interviewed.

Text and photos(except for photo in e) by Pushpa Panadam, LLLLeader.