What is the most common root cause of lactation problems in your practice?
Amplifying Ancestral Practices

Decolonization as Community Health Care

Elizabeth Montez, IBCLC
trigger warnings & a gift

"Indigenous grassroots organizations ALWAYS have to narrate sob-stories about our historical traumas and provide extensive "proof" of the harms we experience, to be believed that our work is worth funding and sustaining. Yet - white-culture organizations never have to answer if their legacy includes HARMING Black and Indigenous peoples."

-Raeanne Madison
Postpartum Healing Lodge
Anishinaabekwe, doula trainer, MPH, organizer, mother, knowledge sharer
Individual challenges

What is the root of these challenges, and how is your work and perinatal industries complicit in perpetuating them? How can we support harm reduction and thriving individuals and communities?

Community disparities

Let's take a look at how this birth and parenting have unfolded over time.
Colonialism: the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. Oxford English Dictionary

Turtle Island: a term for North America commonly used among Indigenous peoples of the land.

Pan-Indianism: the simplification of rich histories and traditions of hundreds of nations into a singular identity.
In a good way

In good relation
wherever you are....
YOU ARE ON
NATIVE LAND
Evolution of Evidence Based Birth & Lactation Care In the US

1850s -- Florence Nightengale begins to codify the model of Evidence Based Practice. McDonald, L "Florence Nightengale and the early origins of evidence based nursing"

1860 - Abraham Jacobi "modern founder of pediatric medicine"

1889 - Howard Kelly, 1st professor of obstetrics

1956 - formation of La Leche League

1985 - creation of IBLCE

1996 - "Evidence Based Practice" became more commonly used clinical terminology, beginning with Sackett et al "Evidence based medicine: what it is and what it isn't" BMJ
What ELSE was happening?

1607 - First colony built in Jamestown
1619 - 20 enslaved people brought to VA near Jamestown
1600's - mid 1900's - non-consensual or coercive wet nursing practices
1819 - 1960 Forced removal of indigenous children to Indian Boarding Schools
1830 - the Indian Removal Act

1850s -- Florence Nightengale begins to codify the model of EBP
1840s - Dr Marion Sims dubbed "the father of gynecology"
1840s - Anarcha, Betsey, Lucy, and countless other enslaved women were tortured and forced to undergo procedures without anesthesia for Dr. Sims' experiments

1860 - Abraham Jacobi "modern founder of pediatric medicine"

January 1, 1863 - The Emancipation Proclamation
June 19, 1865 - the first Juneteenth. 250,000 people released from enslavement
1877 - 1964 - the Jim Crow Era

Pre-contact civilizations
- Hundreds of nations throughout Turtle Island
- Established and thriving African communities
"...We see the power of unity. What happens to one happens to us all. We can starve together or feast together. ALL FLOURISHING IS MUTUAL."

"The federal government's Indian Removal policies wrenched many Native peoples from our homelands. It separated us from our traditional knowledge and lifeways, the bones of our ancestors, our sustaining plants - but even this did not extinguish identity. So the government tried a new tool, separating children from their families and cultures, sending them far away to school, long enough, they hoped, to make them forget who they were."

_Braiding Sweetgrass_
Robin Wall Kimmerer
OK but that was all a REALLY long time ago! How is that relevant to today?

1819 - 1960 Forced removal of indigenous children to Indian Boarding Schools
1600's - mid 1900's - non-consensual or coercive wet nursing practices
1877- 1964 The Jim Crow Era
950s-1980s - targeted removal of indigenous children to foster care systems funneling into adoptions by non-native caretakers

1956 - formation of La Leche League
1985 - creation of IBLCE
1990 - Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)
1996 - "Evidence Based Practice" became more commonly used clinical terminology

2015 - Medolac targets Detroit to for human milk donors, primarily Black women, paying $1/oz in the city with highest infant mortality rate in the country.

2021 - Lowest initiation and duration rates of lactation in the US consistently remain Black and Indigenous families

2022 - Haaland vs Brackeen challenges the constitutionality of ICWA
Is that really the whole story?

Ledger art by Wakeah Jhane (Comanche/Kiowa).

Liberian mother nursing - photo credit UNICEF
"Life unfolds in a spiral, as children begin their own paths, and mothers, rich with knowledge and experience, have a new task set before them. Our strengths turn now to circle wider than our own children, to the well-being of the community. The net stretches larger and larger. The circle bends round again and grandmothers walk the Way of the Teacher..."

Paula Gunn Allen, Grandmothers of the Light
Evidence-based practice is a conscientious, problem-solving approach to clinical practice that incorporates the best evidence from well-designed studies, patient values and preferences, and a clinician's expertise in making decisions about a patient's care. - Nurse.com
Evidenced Based Care

*Beyond the buzz word...*

The burden of proof lies on the intervention
Evidenced Based Care

first step - what is the physiological norm?
Disruptions to Lactation Accepted as Social Norms

- Separation of birthing person and baby
- Timed feedings/schedules
- Access & cost barriers to lactation support
- Gatekeeping of lactation knowledge
- Food insecurity
- Social messaging against "indiscreet" public nursing
- "Breast is best" vs. "Fed is best"
- Expectation of childfree spaces
- Little to no paid family leave
- Lack of understanding around full term lactation
Evidence Based Practices & Policies

- 1 hour contact after birth
  - 30 seconds - 2 minutes "delayed cord clamping"

- Choline supplements
  - (slowly displacing non-EBP sunflower lecithin)

- Heat pads for milk flow

- Reverse pressure softening
  - Lymphatic massage

Elizabeth Montez, IBCLC
"They think they're innovating"

Shevonne Tsegaye
DOH Lactation Friendly Environments Coordinator, Lactation Pathway 1 mentee, Changemaker
Ancestral Practices

Uninterrupted bonding after delivery and support for child/family centered society

30-40 days focus on rest, recovery, and connection

Anti-Inflammatory & Choline Rich Foods
Nettles, wild rice, collard greens, malunggay, congee, eggs, atoles

Warmth food, body, spirit

Massage & Touch taught in community extensive protocols

Kinship & Good relation

Elizabeth Moniez, IBCLC
EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE OR IS IT...SNEAKY RACISM?

Braiding Sweetgrass

"Getting scientists to consider the validity of Indigenous knowledge is like swimming upstream in cold, cold water."
What is the most common root cause of lactation problems in your practice?
What is the antidote to colonial harm?

Decolonization, Community Care, Rematriation, Reciprocity
What Now?

Move through this work in a **good way**

**it starts with listening, reflecting, researching**

Identify ways colonization and white supremacy sneak into your practice

Reduce gate-keeping and barrier creation

Stand in authenticity, not appropriation

Listen. Learn.
Maybe the task assigned to Second Man is to unlearn the model of the kudzu and follow the teachings of (plantain), to strive to become naturalized to place, to throw off the mindset of colonizer. Being naturalized to place means to live as if this the land that feeds you, as if these are the streams from which you drink, that build our body and fill your spirit. To become naturalized is to live as if your children's future matters, to take care of the land as if your children's future matters, to take care of the land as if our lives and the lives of all our relatives depend on it. Because they do. - Robin Wall Kimmerer
Chi Miigwetch to my community and all the teachers who have shared their wisdom with me and gifted me the opportunity to share with you
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