The Road to a Bag-Free Maryland – an 8-year experience

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Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition
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One hospital’s experience:

• 1990’s – Hospital Auxiliary sponsors bags for one year. Distributed instead of formula discharge bags.
  – When the money ran out, the grant was not renewed, citing cost
• 2001 – Request continues, including taking it to the hospital ethics committee
• ~2010 – Department of Pediatrics supports the ban, but Departments of Obstetrics and Nursing say no, citing costs
The seed is planted...

- USBC Coalition meeting 2008
- Melissa Bartick’s talk on Ban the Bags
- “The only way to sell more formula is to sell less breastfeeding”

Numerous studies, and a Cochrane review, have shown an association between free commercial formula discharge bags and decreased breastfeeding!!

(Early supplementation leads to early cessation of breastfeeding)
Discharge Bags....

- Imply hospital endorsement of formula in general, and of a certain brand in particular
- Formula companies say it is “Freedom of Choice”
  - “The only way to sell more formula is to sell less breastfeeding”
- Marketing formula undermines choice by setting mothers up for breastfeeding failure

(From Melissa Bartick, M.D. 2008)

Case Example

• Upper Chesapeake Hospital
• Bel Air, Maryland (~45 minutes north of Baltimore)
Marketing the Family Birthplace of Upper Chesapeake Health

Summer 2010

Credit: Laurie Miele, RN, BSN, IBCLC, RLC

Step 1 – Obtain Approval from Administration

• information from banthebags.org
• Focused on marketing their birthplace to the community – distribute a bag with their logo instead of providing free marketing for a formula company
• Highlighted the cost to families of $700 more/year from brand name formulas vs. less expensive (generic) brands.
• Worked with WIC to enroll patients in hospital
Step 2 – Increasing acceptance from staff

• Staff contest to design and approve a logo, color, bag.
• Funding – some came from infant photo company that took photos in the hospital and some from marketing
• Worked with purchasing department to stop contract with formula company for gift bags.

Step 3 – What to put in the bag?

• Found a bag and pre-determined where it would be stored in the hospital
• Developed a committee and worked with Marketing to decide what to go inside the bag (no formula marketing material!). Car window shade with hospital logo included.
Roll Out..
A New Initiative AT UCH...

• Within the next several weeks we will be implementing the distribution of a new gift bag to our new mothers.
• At that time, we will no longer be distributing the gift bags currently provided by the formula companies.

Why No More Formula Bags?

• Our mission, vision and values are to promote the health of our community. Marketing a product that can potentially undermine the health of our patients is a conflict of interest.
• In UCH’s continued pursuit of Excellence and Quality, breastfeeding is the GOLD standard of excellence for infant nutritional health as well as the mother’s health.
Facts About Formula Bags

- Formula is regulated by the FDA and whether a mother uses store brand formula or more expensive designer brands such as Enfamil or Similac, the nutritional value is the same.
- Over the course of a year these designer brand formulas cost $700 more than store brands. Most of this money is used for more marketing. The gift bag itself costs less than $7.00.

Ban the Bag

- The new Upper Chesapeake gift bag will bear the Family Birthplace logo that was selected by Team Members. Everything included in the bag will promote the Family Birthplace and can be utilized whether you are breastfeeding or formula feeding.
- We know our team members are the best health care product any mom or baby need. Let’s market the best, OURSELVES!
Other States Begin to Go Bag Free!

- Rhode Island – December 2011
- Massachusetts – July 2012

Then, later on...
- Washington, DC – August 2014
- Delaware – July 2015

Meanwhile, in Maryland...

American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN

Speaking for Maryland Kids!
MDAAP Newsletter April 2011

“Last week 2 boxes of Similac formula along with special “Welcome Packs” (nice bag, formula, coupons) arrived at my office without a request.... And, there are always the free discharge bags new mothers receive in the hospital complete with formula ‘just in case’ there are problems...So, what’s the big deal? Does it really affect breastfeeding rates? The answer, of course, is that it does....”

(Upper Chesapeake and Johns Hopkins were the only 2 hospitals bag free at this writing)

“Commercial infant formula is readily available to these women and their families, and we are not trying to eliminate the product, nor are we passing judgment on women who cannot or choose not to breastfeed. But, the vast majority of women enter the hospital intending to breastfeed. In order to support these mothers...we believe healthcare facilities must provide adequate support, which includes removing formula marketing from their premises.”
MDAAP Newsletter Fall 2012

• Cited Public Citizen’s campaign
• Cited 2011 Surgeon General’s Call to Action
• Praised the 6 hospitals who had banned the bags!
  — Johns Hopkins, Upper Chesapeake, Mercy, Shady Grove, Memorial Hospital at Easton, MedStar St. Mary’s
  — Most of these hospitals were working toward Baby Friendly

Maryland Model Hospital Breastfeeding Policy is Launched! – November 2012

DHMH encourages all birthing hospitals in the State to become “Maryland Best Practices Hospitals,” by either attaining Baby Friendly certification or, by meeting the ten criteria contained in their policy recommendations.
DHMH Maryland Model Hospital Breastfeeding Policy

• Stakeholders meeting December 2011
• Draft shared for public commentary February 2012 and August 2012
• Finalized October 2012 and launched November 2012
• Policy based on 10 Steps to Baby Friendly

#8 – Give breastfed infants no food or drink, other than breast milk, unless medically indicated.

• d. Do not accept free formula, advertisements, or formula coupons for use in the hospital or distribution to breastfeeding mothers.
MBC Launches Its Ban the Bags Campaign! – Winter 2012-2013

Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition

Ban The Bags

What is the “Ban The Bags” campaign?

It has been a common practice for infant formula companies to distribute bags containing formula samples, coupons, and other advertising to maternity patients in hospitals. These free “gift” bags have been shown to increase formula sales and decrease the duration of breastfeeding. This strategy is successful as a marketing practice because the bags are given to mothers by healthcare providers, who appear implicitly to be promoting the use of formula. “Ban the Bags” is a national campaign to stop formula company marketing in maternity hospitals. All Maryland maternity hospitals now are free of infant formula marketing, including company-sponsored discharge bags. Maryland joins Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Delaware in making this transition. We hope that all states will join this campaign and help end a practice that costs parents money and leads to negative health outcomes for mothers and babies.

The Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition fully supports the “Ban the Bags” campaign. We have prepared a brief presentation for health professionals to highlight the research regarding the effects of formula discharge bags and suggest how hospitals can approach banning the bags. This presentation can be found at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhNq-Obm-M. We encourage you to view and share it with other health care providers. The presentation is also available here for you to download.

Maryland Hospitals Who Have Banned the Bag

Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition commends the following hospitals in Maryland who have gone bag-free:

- Anne Arundel Medical Center
- Carroll Hospital Center
- Carroll Hospital Center
- Frederick Memorial Hospital
- Garrett Regional Medical Center
- General Hospital of Western Maryland (Waynesboro)
- Holy Cross Hospital
- Holy Cross Germantown Hospital
- Howard County General Hospital
- Prince George's Hospital Center
- Saint Agnes Hospital
- St. John's Hospital
- St. Mary's Medical Center
- St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center
- St. Mary's Hospital
- Union Hospital of Cecil County
- University of Maryland Medical Center
- University of Maryland Baltimore Washington Medical Center
- University of Maryland Center for Women and Infants
- Union Hospital of Cecil County
- University of Maryland Prince George's Medical Center
- University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Medical Center
- Walter Reed National Military Medical Center
- Washington Adventist Hospital
- Washington Adventist University

Resources

Several resources are available to healthcare providers and consumers to stop formula company marketing in maternity hospitals. The “Ban the Bags” campaign grew out of efforts in Massachusetts to stop aggressive formula company marketing tactics in hospitals. The national campaign is working to educate consumers on the issue and encourage health care professionals and families in the effort. The campaign offers a tool kit, which includes educational materials developed by the Massachusetts Breastfeeding...
Letters to Maryland Hospitals - November 2012 & January 2013

- Letters were sent to all Maryland birthing hospitals
  -
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  -

- second one from the Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition
- Cited DHMH Model Hospital Breastfeeding Policy
Specific Examples Cited

- departments, some like Upper Chesapeake Medical Center and Shady Grove Adventist Hospital have designed and distributed their own discharge “gifts” which advertise their respective hospitals.
- Johns Hopkins Hospital stopped giving out formula samples over three years ago as part of a hospital-wide effort to stymie the marketing of pharmaceuticals within its facilities. The hospital administration has chosen not to give out a replacement bag.
- Other hospitals such as Memorial Hospital at Easton discontinued distribution at the behest of Risk Management upon investigating their liability in the event of a formula recall or a baby getting sick from expired or contaminated formula.

Your hospital aims to promote the health of infants and mothers, but when providing the bag and/or formula samples, the ongoing promotion of infant formula sends the inaccurate message that these products are medically approved, endorsed, and necessary.
Momentum Builds!

- Sinai Hospital – February 2013
  - It took just one administrator to decide this was important and it was done!
- Many other hospitals also saw this as “low hanging fruit” for the DHMH program.
- Most hospitals simply discontinued the bags without replacements. None reported complaints from families. 1-800 number available for those who wanted a bag.

August, 2013

- All 32 of Maryland’s birthing hospitals committed to the DHMH program
- 9 committed to work toward Baby Friendly
- 23 committed to following Maryland Hospital Breastfeeding Policy recommendations.

(Several other hospitals have since started working on Baby Friendly status thanks for NICHQ and EMPOWER grants.)
DHMH Maryland Hospital Breastfeeding Policy

- DHMH has sent assessments to hospitals 3 times since its launch, and has hosted sharing of information through webinars and conference calls.
- Assessments asked hospitals to identify the steps they were meeting and any impediments to achieving other steps.
  — Served as a reminder and a nudge.

2013-2015: Continuing to Follow-Up

- Periodic polling and tallying of hospitals
- MBC members helped identify contacts at hospitals.
- Emails and calls to hospital administrators.
- Slowly whittling down the numbers.
- By end of summer 2015 only 1 hospital left!
  — That hospital closed its maternity unit in 10/2015
October 2015 – Maryland is Bag Free!

Maryland: 4th State to Go Discharge Bag-Free

10/18/2016

Mothers in Maryland will no longer leave the hospital with a free discharge bag of infant formula. To encourage breastfeeding, all of the state’s maternity hospitals have ended formula giveaways. This practice is a critical step toward increasing breastfeeding rates. Maryland has paved the way for healthier children, healthier mothers, and a healthier population. Please see the latest press release.

Maryland hospitals stop giving away free samples of formula to new mothers

By Meredith Cohn • Contact Reporter

The Baltimore Sun

Picture of Health
Your daily dose of information on better living

SUNDAY APR 3, 2016 BREAKING SPORTS MARYLAND LIGHT CITY OPINION OBITS NEWS PAPER, ADVERTISING

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Oct. 15, 2012

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The Road to Bag-Free Maryland—an 8 year Experience
Note to hospitals: Formula is not the enemy

• “Maryland officials recently, and rather self-righteously announced...”
• “I'm all for getting rid of the swag bag; hospitals shouldn't be marketing anything. But linking the decision to breastfeeding sends a message that formula itself is bad, piling on to the already enormous — and sometimes detrimental — pressure to nurse.”
• “Formula is not the enemy; the debilitating stress over the decision to use it is.”

Formula is food; breast milk is much more

• “Why must society lay such judgment and morality on everything we do?”
• “As a pediatrician I want to maximize the health potential of my patients. Among other things, I also recommend vaccines, car seats, eating fruits and vegetables, and exercising to my patients.”

Dana Silver, MD
Formula is food; breast milk is much more

- should not be zealots. I campaigned to stop distribution of formula discharge bags from hospitals because it is an unethical way for formula companies to gain free advertising."
- “I fully believe that most mothers can attain success in breastfeeding without guilt if we as a community encircle them with the time, close follow-up and encouragement needed.”

Dana Silver, MD

Lessons Learned

- Peer pressure works!
- Part of our success was timing, building on DHMH program and momentum from other states.
- Free formula in hospitals has been around so long that people think it’s normal.
  
  "hospital with meals for the next few days.”
  
  (from Amy Resnik, Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition)

- Be mindful of how you phrase things!
Next Steps

• Bags are no longer distributed in hospitals but there are still well meaning nurses and others.
  – A few bottles of formula go home in mom’s bags.
  – Undermines her confidence.
• Formula Companies have moved marketing bags to non-traditional locations
  – Physician offices, retailers, private radiology practices
• Continue to work with DHMH. Awaiting results of their most recent assessment to identify other areas to target.

Questions?