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### Breastfeeding and How it Affects Cognitive Development

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# Breastfeeding and How it Affects Cognitive Development

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## PICOT Statement

**Population:** Infants

**Intervention:** Breastfeeding

**Comparison:** Formula feeding

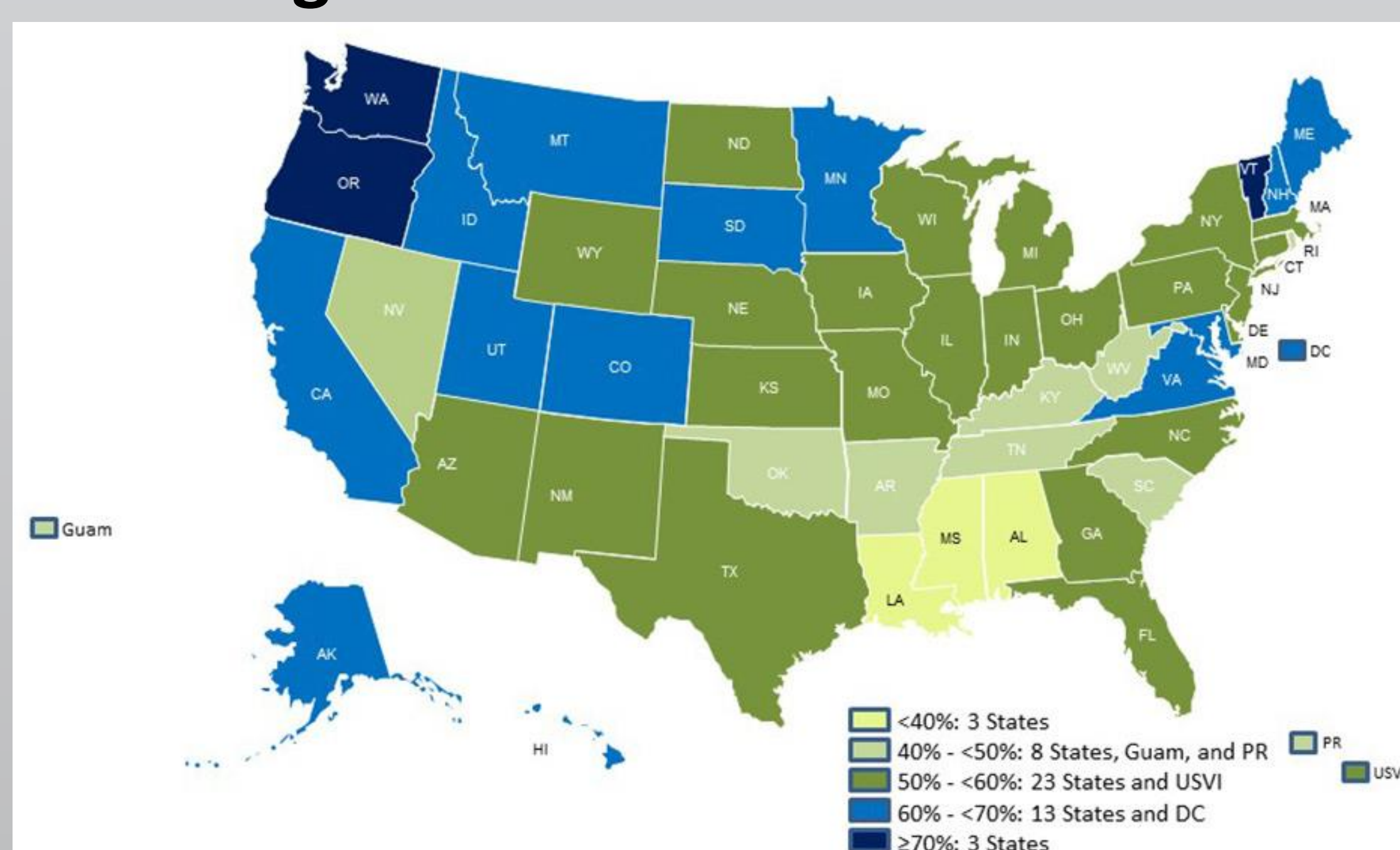
**Outcome:** Better cognitive outcomes

**Time:** Over a lifetime

## Background Information

- Breast milk has all the nutrients each individual baby needs to grow and develop
- Breastfed babies are less likely to develop health problems
- Breastfeeding is way more convenient for all parties involved
- Only 25.5% of infants are exclusively breastfed to 6 months of age
- Only 34.1% of infants are still receiving any sort of breastmilk at 1 year of age

## Percentage of Babies Breastfed at 6 months



## Interventions

Educate mothers on how easy it is to breastfeed, about breastfeeding supplies, and on latching/positioning before they leave the hospital.

Put more professional and peer support groups into place.

Educate all mothers on the importance of breastfeeding their infant

- All moms that are capable should exclusively breastfeed their infants until six months of age
- Explain the benefits that come from breastfeeding

## Clinical Question

In Infants how does breastfeeding compared to formula feeding influence cognitive development over a lifetime?



## Abstract

If one was asked “which is better: breastfeeding or formula feeding?” The most common answer would be “breastfeeding.” This would be the answer 9 times out of 10. It is a known fact by a wide range of people, that in general, breastfeeding is the better option. Infants who are breastfed exclusively in the first six months of life tend to have better overall health outcomes than children that are fed only iron-fortified formula or a combination of the two. Therefore, there is potential that breastfeeding will indeed also improve cognitive developmental outcomes. That is the purpose of this study. To compare the cognitive developmental outcomes in infants who are breastfed as opposed to formula fed, and how this will affect them during their lifespan. Breastfeeding is not hard to do or learn. It is the most convenient and has endless benefits for both parties. Still, only a meager one-fourth of all babies are breastfed exclusively to six months of age in the United States. There are components in breast milk that lead researchers to believe that breast milk alone can have enough of an impact to make a difference in cognition. In order to prove this, researchers have done tests to evaluate cognitive abilities. These tests evaluated problem solving and vocabulary, along with many other skills. There are still many uncertainties in the proposed positive outcome that breastfeeding can indeed improve cognitive development. However, if there is any chance that it could play a factor in benefiting the infant, then we should most definitely promote breastfeeding whenever possible.

## Anticipated Outcomes

- Increasing the number of breastfeeding moms will in turn improve the overall cognitive development of these babies.
- Breastfeeding will also provide numerous other benefits for both the infant and the mother.

## Gaps in the Literature

- The data collected on mothers interviewed is strictly off word of mouth with no actual proof of authenticity.
- There are so many other factors that can come into consideration when evaluating cognitive outcomes. Ex. Economic status, mother’s education level, environmental factors, ethnicity, etc.
- Not all mothers can breastfeed
  - Mothers who are HIV/AIDS positive
  - Mothers taking certain medications that treat their ongoing health problem.
  - Mothers with a drug or alcohol addiction
- More studies should be conducted in this area in order to find more conclusive results. If breast milk has all the current proven benefits, then most likely it is beneficial in the area of cognition
- Maybe a new way of conducting research could be helpful. This way results can be guaranteed to be authentic.

## References

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