Is this medication safe to use in breastfeeding?

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**Recommended Citation**

Stephens, Amelia; Brodribb, Wendy; McGuire, Treasure; and Deckx, Laura, "Is this medication safe to use in breastfeeding?" (2016). *Faculty of Health Sciences & Medicine Publications*. Paper 1352.  

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Is This Medication Safe to Use in Breastfeeding?

A Stephens, W Brodribb, TM McGuire, L Deckx

Background

There is still considerable uncertainty regarding some medication use during breastfeeding. Resources provide differing information, making it harder for primary carers to deliver, and for consumers to access, consistent evidence-based information. This study aimed to compare lactation-related questions from consumers and health professionals, to target education for safer medication use.

Methods

- A mixed-method study of lactation-related call data extracted from two Australian medicines call-centre databases
  1. NPS Medicines Line (NPSML) 5,662 calls from the general public.
  2. Therapeutic Advice and Information Service (TAIS) 2,219 calls from health professionals.
     - Top ranked medicines and classes were identified.
     - Call narratives were explored comparing key themes between callers.

Findings

Interestingly, the most common consumer questions involved paracetamol and a standout theme was suitable cough and cold treatments whilst lactating. For health professionals, the safest antidepressant was very commonly queried. For both cohorts, question themes focused on safety of the medications, risk minimisation and effects on milk supply.

Main theme clusters are pictured.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NPSML</th>
<th>TAIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Callers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (95%)</td>
<td>GPs (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-related query (34.5%)</td>
<td>Community pharmacists (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-related query (57.4%)</td>
<td>Nurses (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most Common Medications in Queries</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paracetamol (6.9%)</td>
<td>Sertraline (3.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibuprofen (4.8%)</td>
<td>Levonorgestrel (2.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codeine (4.2%)</td>
<td>Domperidone (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding further breastfeeding mothers’ and health professionals’ concerns is a key step in developing targeted resources, so primary carers can be more proactive in addressing information gaps to improve medication safety in lactation.

Published May 2016

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This research is supported by funding from the Australian Government under the Australian General Practice Training Programme. Acknowledgments also to NPS MedicineWise and Mater Health Services.