

World's first lactation dictionary launched by UWA researchers

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A world-first lactation dictionary that aims to take the confusion out of breastfeeding was launched today by researchers from The University of Western Australia.



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LactaPedia is an online glossary of lactation for science and medicine that sets the international standard for breastfeeding language and helps women understand what normal function is.

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As reported in *The Journal of Human Lactation*, early weaning represents a major public health concern and results in an estimated \$4 billion loss to the Australian economy each year.

Lead researcher Melinda Boss, a senior research fellow in the pharmacy division of UWA's School of Allied Health, aims to improve these statistics by improving on the basic medical understanding of human lactation that is often lacking in modern society.

LactaPedia was created by Ms Boss and Emeritus Professor Peter Hartmann to address the lack of basic accessible science on lactation and help counteract some of the conflicting advice women receive when breastfeeding.

It defines more than 560 terms associated with lactation including physiology, the composition of human milk and conditions that affect lactation. The lactation dictionary can be freely accessed by medical professionals and scientists as well as the general public.

Ms Boss said the tool would support effective lactation by eliminating inconsistencies in terminology and improve understanding of human lactation.

“Lactation completes the reproductive cycle but is considered outside of the scope of modern medicine,” Ms Boss said. “Conflicting advice is one of the most common factors that impact a mother’s confidence in her ability to breastfeed and sustain lactation.

“Even basic terms such as breastfeed and lactation have varying definitions and common conditions such as mastitis have several definitions attached which make it confusing for mothers and professionals to assess normal function. Our hope is to create a common medical and scientific understanding that will help to normalise human lactation.”

The launch of LactaPedia coincides with World Breastfeeding Week, which runs from Wednesday 1 August to Tuesday 7 August. The research team gratefully acknowledges the support of The Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation, based in Switzerland.