An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Nursing Practice

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Examining the Barriers and Facilitators of Breastfeeding Duration among Active-Duty Military Mothers

Date: April 8, 2016
Time: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Place: NAB, CR-2 (classroom 106)

Abstract
Objective: To describe breastfeeding duration as well as barriers and facilitators experienced by active-duty women in the United States military.
Design: A cross-sectional design guided the study.
Setting: The setting was a social media site offering breastfeeding education and support for military mothers.
Participants: The sample included 292 mothers who reported having a baby, initiating breastfeeding postpartum, and returning to work while serving active-duty in the United States within the last five years.
Methods: An investigator-designed Qualtrics survey with multiple choice, Likert, and open-ended questions was used. Analysis procedures focused on descriptive statistics, chi-square, and logistic regression. Content analysis was used to identify common themes in qualitative data.
Results: Participants reported breastfeeding at a rate in line with Healthy People 2020 goals. Enlisted as compared with officer mothers were less likely to meet their breastfeeding goals (32% vs 50%) and more likely to report job barriers as the primary reason for cessation (42% vs 26%). The most frequently reported job-related barriers were lack of time and proper accommodation. Facilitators included self-motivation, proper accommodations, schedule flexibility, workplace support and policy. Perception of the military as being a hindrance was the primary predictor of not meeting breastfeeding goals. The need for providing leadership with education on breastfeeding was a major theme.
Conclusions: Addressing issues that might ease the difficulties in balancing career and family are vital for retention in the military which is now experiencing 30% greater loss of childbearing age women than men. Military policies related to maternity leave and lactation are a work-in-progress, but findings from this study show that perception of support from the military is a critical factor in meeting one’s breastfeeding goal.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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