Invest in Breastfeeding: Key to saving money and lives

Andy Zheng ’20 WWS
Jabulani Rural Health Foundation in South Africa
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Introduction
- There are 18 clinics surrounding one tertiary hospital yet the government still wants to fund more clinics
- There is little quality assurance for drinking water.
- WHO recommends exclusively breastfeeding (EBF) for the first 6 months of a baby’s life.

Objective of the Study
Analyzed both statistics on access to the nearest healthcare facility and breastfeeding.

Area studied, labeling the clinic/hospital in purple, and residents in red houses. Green charts herbalists and grey charts Sangomas.

Work profile
- Overall examining the health of the local community
- I analyzed access to facilities by measuring the distance between the houses and clinics, hospitals, herbalists, and Sangomas
- Also analyzed the statistics on breastfeeding.

Reflection
- Used python, excel, and R to compute estimated GPS distance.
- Learned the spherical law of cosine and the haversine formula to help in calculation.
- Used different methods to analyze the internal validity of the data.
- Looked at the breastfeeding rates for various groups of mothers and researched breastfeeding to compare the data to current literature.
- Helped out another NGO that focuses on helping students from rural backgrounds attain a higher education.
- Understood the intersectionality and complexity in working to empower rural areas that are poorly funded.

Where I did most of my research.

- People generally have access to clinics, so the government should invest money strengthening the clinics rather than building more clinics.
- The rates of exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) up to 6 months is still quite low, ranging from 10% to 35% depending on calculations with different ways of asking the same question. Nevertheless, this range is higher than before, which hovers around 11%.
- Most women (64%) report the reason they don’t EBF is because they believe their breastmilk is not enough for the baby.

Looking ahead
- Through experiencing the complex NGOs required to uplift a rural area, I’ve become even more certain that I want to go into health policies and find ways to make the system work more efficiently.

Questions
- What is the best way to encourage women, especially in areas where there isn’t access to safe drinking water, to exclusively breastfeed for the first 6 months of life?
- How should we get more health professionals into rural areas?

Conclusion
- With the counseling that hospitals are providing mothers, mothers are slowly increasing their breastfeeding rates.
- We should continue to fund healthcare facilities but maybe focusing on education of patients as well.

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