

# Wednesday Webinar: April 2019

## *Infant Feeding in Emergencies: CHEER's work with refugees in Greece*

Presented by

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Airinie Azhar, CHEER Coordinator for Greece

Press \*6 to mute your line, #6 to unmute. Please do not press hold.  
You can use the chat box for questions during the presentation.

# Upcoming CHAMPS Trainings

- (4- hour) Garden Park Medical Center
  - Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (morning and afternoon)
- (15- hour) Greenwood Leflore Hospital
  - Friday, May 31<sup>st</sup> to Sunday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019
- Trainings are open to all CHAMPS hospitals and CHAMPS community partners. You can register for the trainings at [CHEERequity.org/trainings](https://CHEERequity.org/trainings)





SAVE THE DATE!



TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29

**PRE-CONFERENCE &  
COMMUNITY FORUM**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30

# **CHAMPS CONFERENCE 2019**



**Clyde Muse Center in Pearl, MS**

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# Upcoming Wednesday Webinars

*Webinars are held in collaboration with the Mississippi State Department of Health and are scheduled on Wednesdays from 12-1p CST*

- **May 15<sup>th</sup>:** “How to be Successful: Staffing & Sustainability at Baby-Friendly Hospitals.”  
*Presented by Alice Chaney Herndon, MSN, RNC-NIC; Amy Brower, BSN, RNC-OB; Rene Simpson, BSN, RN, IBCLC; LouAnn Wall, RN, IBCLC*

For log-in information or for slides and recordings of past webinars, visit: [cheerequity.org/webinars.html](https://cheerequity.org/webinars.html)

If there are topics you would like covered, please email [CHAMPSbreastfeed@gmail.com](mailto:CHAMPSbreastfeed@gmail.com) or talk to your CHAMPS hospitals coach about your ideas.



# CHEER'S work in Greece: Infant Feeding in Emergencies among refugee populations

Anne Merewood PhD MPH IBCLC

Director, Center for Health Equity, Education and Research (CHEER) at  
Boston University School of Medicine

Airinie Azhar, National Director, CHEERinGreece



# Today's webinar

- Introduction to CHEER
- Athens and Greece
- Overview of IFE (Infant Feeding in Emergencies)
- Supporting mothers in their feeding practices



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# CHEER's Background

- The Breastfeeding Center (1997) - originally a clinical service, became a research-based Center in 2006
- Became CHEER (Center for Health Equity, Education, and Research) in 2016 with a focus on intervention and evaluation
- We work across the USA with a particular focus on Mississippi and 'Indian country' (Midwest, Alaska, Montana)
- CHEER is a national member of the US Breastfeeding Committee

# Populations CHEER works with in the US



- African American populations in the south
- American Indian and Alaska Natives





# Breastfeeding work in Greece



- Breastfeeding has many champions and an emerging core of clinician lactation supporters
- La Leche League of Greece has long supported breastfeeding



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# Galaxias IBCLC Organization's 12<sup>th</sup> annual conference – April 13/14 2019



# Refugees in Greece: Who, where, why?

- Increased, intense conflict in Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa
- Refugees flee by land or sea to Europe - Greece, Italy, Spain
- The goal is usually to reach Western Europe but as borders have closed, many are stuck in entry nations (73,000 in Greece)
- Greece is in an economic crisis and somewhat dysfunctional
- Camps are over-capacity, shelters are full, and aid is backlogged
- Conditions range from fair to appalling depending on location



# UNHCR record of arrivals to Greece

Year	Sea arrivals	Land arrivals	Dead and missing
2018	32,494	18,014	174
2017	29,718	6,592	59
2016	173,450	3,784	441
2015	856,723	4,907	799
2014	41,038	2,280	405

# Breastfeeding in emergencies

- In crises, breastfeeding becomes a matter of life and death
- Antibiotics, vaccinations, electricity, literacy, etc. protect formula-fed infants in stable situations
- In emergencies, formula feeding is not safe



# Meeting the WHO recommendation for 6m of exclusive breastfeeding

- Save >800 000 lives every year, most of them children under 6 months
- Prevent ½ of all diarrheal diseases and 1/3 of all respiratory infections in children in low- and middle-income countries

# Breastfeeding vs formula feeding in a crisis

- To make, store, and feed formula safely, you need:
  - Infant formula...enough, and age appropriate (not animal milk)
  - Reliable source of clean water
  - Place to boil/sterilize water
  - Sterile feeding bottles
  - Refrigeration
  - Bottles refrigerated, not re-used
  - Ability to read the directions (concentration of powder to water; frequency and volume of feeds, etc)

# Breastfeeding...needs no

- Sterilization
- Refrigeration
- Bottles
- Money
- Literacy
- Special diet...





# Breastfeeding advantages for women

- Greater self esteem
- Ability to control something – no need for any outside help
- Empowering and fulfilling
- It's FREE! All the money spent on formula could be spent on those darn diapers!!

# Breastfeeding in Greece

- Among Greek women (2017): Initiation around 94%
- Exclusive breastfeeding at 1 month – 40%
- Exclusive at 6 months <1%
- Cesarean rate around 60%

# Breastfeeding among refugee women

- CHEER assessed infant feeding status among infants of refugee women in greater Athens analysing deidentified infant feeding information supplied by AMURTEL, collected via client intake form over 6 months in 2017/18



# Breastfeeding among refugees in Athens

CHEER study, accepted for the Nutrition and Nurture in Infancy and Childhood: Bio-Cultural Perspectives conference, MAINN, Ulaanbaatar, Jun 10-13 and the North American Refugee Health Conference, Toronto, Canada, June 14-16, 2019

- 318 mother-infant pairs from 30 nations; most common nationalities Afghani (37%) and Syrian (24%)
- 40% of births by Caesarean section
- 92% of women initiated breastfeeding
- Median duration of exclusive breastfeeding = 4 weeks
- Most common reasons for starting formula:
  - 'Not enough breastmilk' (31%) and
  - 'Formula given by a health professional' (19%)

# Breastfeeding among refugees in Athens

- Not breastfeeding within the first hour associated with shortened duration of any (AHR 6.81; 95% CI 1.81-25.62) and exclusive breastfeeding (AHR 2.1; 95% CI 1.24-3.55).
- Cesarean birth associated with shorter duration of exclusive breastfeeding (AHR 2.01; 95%CI 1.24-3.55).

**Conclusion:** WHO infant feeding guidelines are not being met.....



# IFE guidelines in Attika area camps

- The Emergency Nutrition Network and UNICEF created the Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies Operational Guidelines (OG-IFE) to guide organizers/administrators/volunteers working in camps/other emergency situations
- CHEER assessed implementation of IFE Operational Guidelines by reviewing UNHCR's Site Profiles for Greek Refugee camps (May 2018) and by 1 on 1 interviews with the field coordinators responsible for day-to-day camp operation in the 6 Attika-area camps

# IFE guidelines in Attika camps

- 6000+ refugees in 6 Attika camps
- UNHCR's Site Profiles documents mother-infant safe spaces at 3, but field coordinators report only 1
- IFE guidelines recommend policies and training, but no field coordinators were aware of any IFE-related policies or any training for clinicians, staff, or volunteers



# So what are the IFYCE guidelines?

- Created by UNICEF ++ as part of the WHO/UNICEF global strategy on infant and young child feeding
- Apply to emergency preparedness, response and recovery to minimize infant and young child morbidity and mortality

English



## Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies

**Operational  
Guidance for  
Emergency Relief  
Staff and  
Programme  
Managers**

**Developed by the  
IFE Core Group**

**Version 3.0 – October 2017**



CENTER FOR HEALTH EQUITY,  
EDUCATION, & RESEARCH

# IFE guidelines recommend

- 6 months of exclusive breastfeeding
- Relevant training for those who work with refugees
- Policy and guidelines for emergency settings where refugees live

# After this assessment, CHEER began to....

- Work in 3 refugee camps and 1 shelter offering hands on help
  - Train at non profits and agencies based in Athens
  - Recruit volunteers and supporters to help with the work
- No other organizations offer this type of outreach or training to professionals in Greece right now



Athens NGO Co-ordination Group meet at CHEER offices in Greece



# Skaramagas refugee camp

- Largest refugee camp on mainland Greece
- ~3000 residents; 10-12 births/month
- Managed by
  - The Greek Ministry of Migration
  - The Danish Refugee Council
  - Drop in the Ocean (Woman Space)



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# At Skaramagas Women & Baby area, CHEER...

- Installed a weigh scale
- Taught mothers and volunteers how to operate the sterilizer
- Runs regular support groups for women
- Trained Drops in the Ocean volunteers





# Skaramagas work



# Eleonas refugee camp

- First Refugee Camp to open on mainland Greece in 2015
- Currently ~2300 residents
- Managed by the Greek government
- CHEER works with Project Elea







# CHEER at Eleonas refugee camp

- Operates with Project Elea in the Women's Space
- Installed a baby weigh scale
- Runs weekly support group and informational sessions:
  - Reproductive health
  - Nutrition
  - Breastfeeding
- Monitoring infants and babies - growth





# Oinofyta Refugee Camp (60km from Athens)

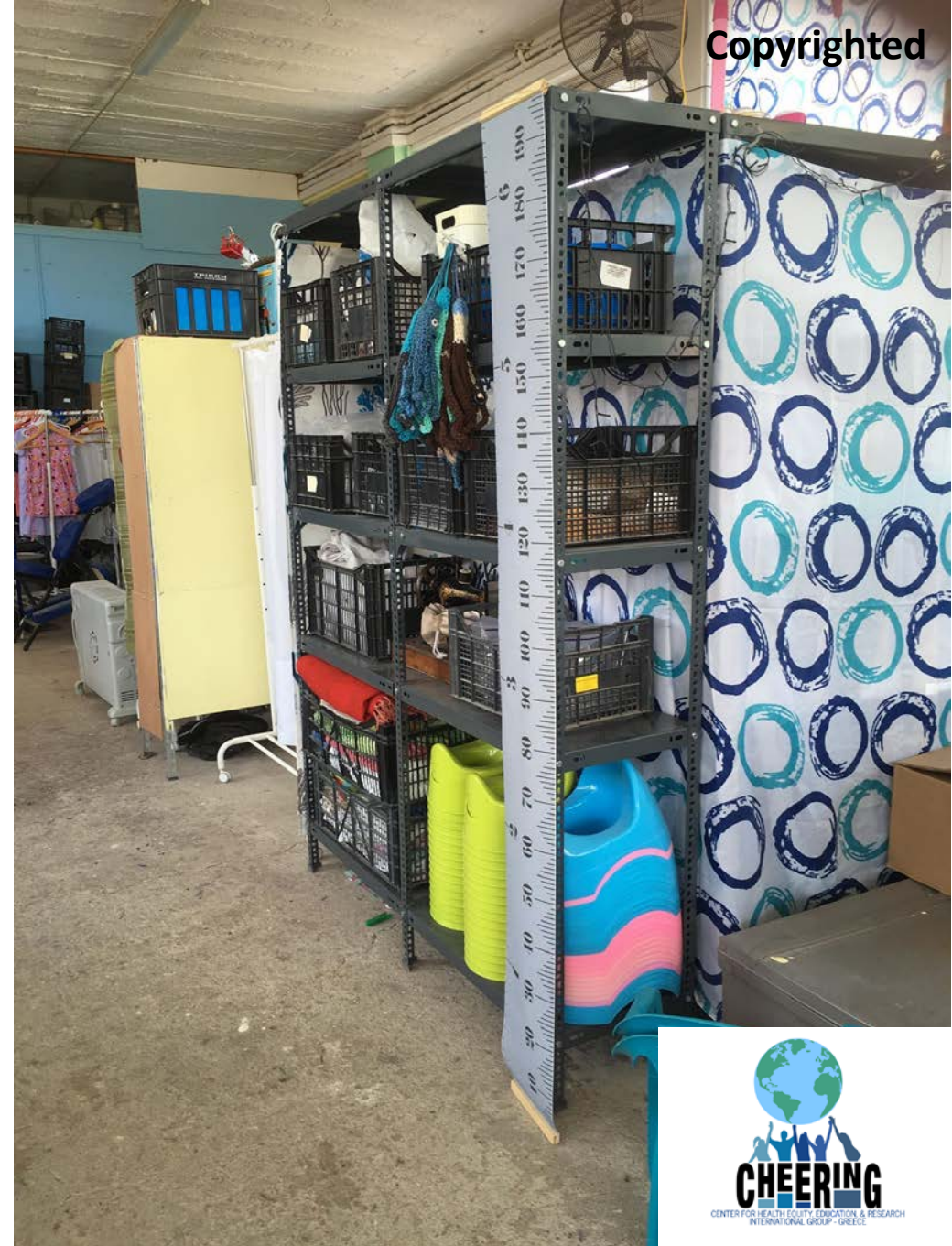
- CHEER travels with a mobile doctor team in their ambulance when space is available
- Care is at the 'Do Your Part' community center a few km from the Camp







- CHEER installed a baby scale and measuring chart
- Weight checks on infants and young children
- Begun to monitor infant growth





# Provocando la Paz shelter

- Down the street from CHEER's office in Athens
- Run by Spanish volunteers
- One of rare locations offering housing for families with children
- About 20 families/60 people/mostly children/9 babies under 6 m
- Emergency housing well run but crowded and full
- Turn away 1-2 families per day due to lack of space



# First group session at Provocando

- All moms and babies who speak French, Arabic or Farsi!
- CHEER provided Farsi interpreter
- Many babies had not been weighed since birth
- Misinformation – sometimes from medical professionals – was rife
- Mothers had many worries and questions
- Inter-cultural experience was tremendous



# Reproductive health discussion at Provocando

- Talked about menstruation
- Women's monthly cycles
- How you become pregnant
- Contraception
- What's next?





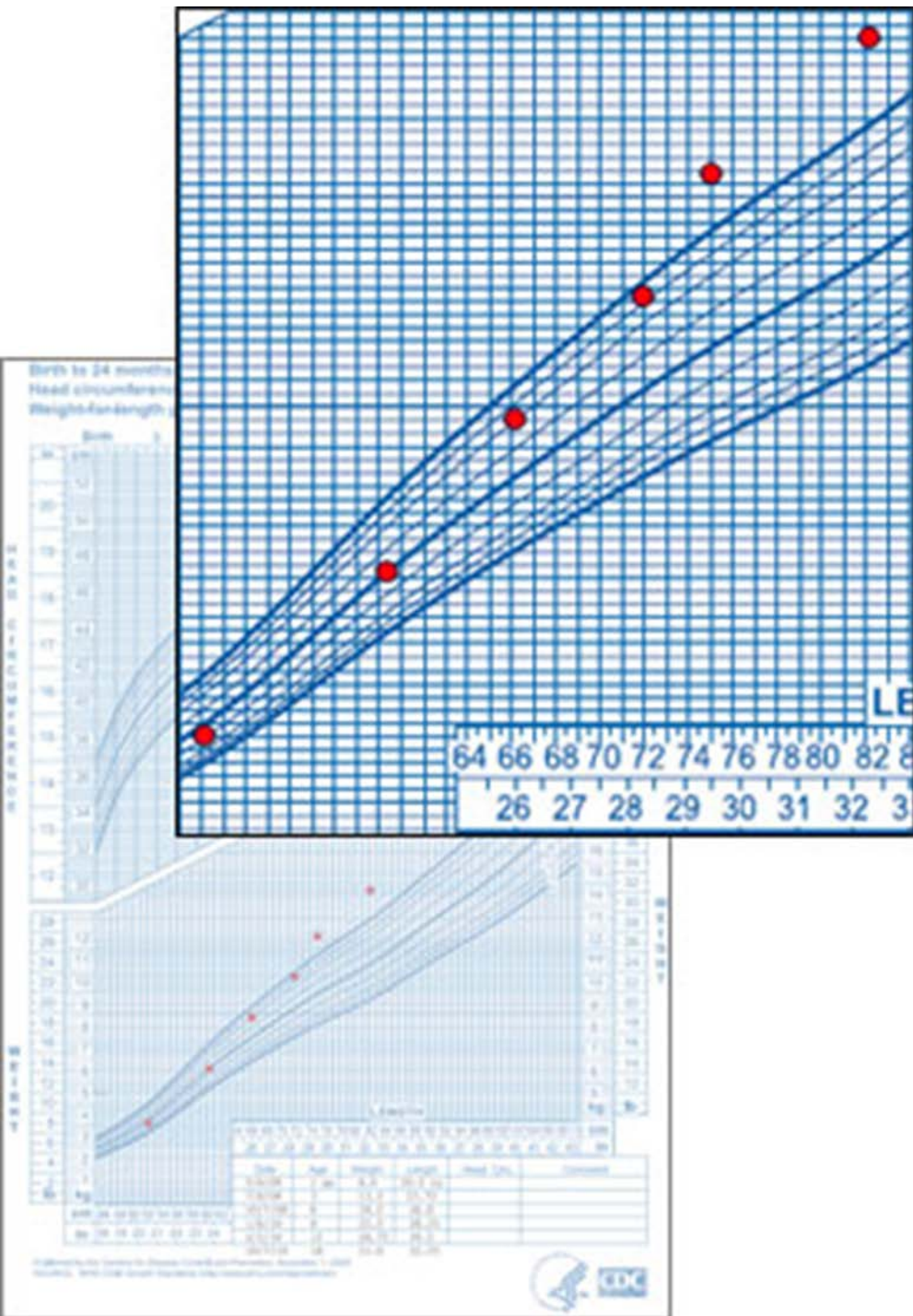
# What kind of scenarios did we find?

- Medical professionals had told mothers to add extra formula and sugar to bottled milk to give babies calories and ‘energy’
- Women desperately worried about lack of supply
- When we weighed infants, most were on track for weight gain
- CHEER installed a sterilizer to make bottle feeding safer
- Began coordinating with traveling volunteer doctors



# Set up moving forward

- Provocando volunteers and managers attended CHEER training
- CHEER tested the weigh scale and brought tape measures
- Payment to Farsi interpreter
- Trained local volunteers
- Began weekly visits to track weight and growth



# What next?

- We are seeking funding and donations
- This work differs from other CHEER work as it involves more of a direct service component
- We have done some training at the larger organizations where doctors and volunteers operate and our goal is to do more upstream training work internationally
- We are looking to collaborate with Greek clinicians and lactation groups
- “Baby-Friendly Crete” and “Baby-Friendly Cyprus”?!



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