

Joint press release: University Children's Hospital Basel and the Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation

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Swiss research project examines how mild induced labour prior to caesarean section may help mothers to better initiate breastfeeding

The Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation (FLRF) finances a new clinical study by the University Children's Hospital Basel (UKBB), in close cooperation with the University Hospital of Zurich (USZ) and with the support of three other Swiss hospitals. The study examines how the mild induction of labour and the concomitant release of hormones prior to caesarean sections help mothers to initiate and maintain breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding has multiple health benefits for both mother and child. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF recommend newborns and infants be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life. To help this recommendation become reality, FLRF invests globally in research projects on breastfeeding. FLRF aims to provide health professionals with science-based information to support mothers more effectively in achieving their breastfeeding goals, and consequently, sustainably promote the well-being of mother and child.

In recent years, caesarean section rates have risen significantly; in some regions, caesarean deliveries outpace those of spontaneous deliveries. Epidemiological studies indicate that mothers who give birth to babies by caesarean section are more likely to experience difficulties initiating breastfeeding than mothers who give birth by spontaneous delivery. These difficulties have been attributed to an absence of necessary hormones that are released during spontaneous deliveries. Recent initial evidence suggests that the mild induction of labour prior to a caesarean section can trigger the release of these important hormones. They support the lung breathing of newborns, but at the same time can help with the initiation of breastfeeding. These first findings need to be further examined and verified in a major study.

With CHF 680,000 in funding, FLRF is paving the way for the clinical study by the UKBB and the USZ. The study will further examine initial epidemiological findings and investigate whether the mild induction of labour prior to medically indicated caesarean sections improves lactation initiation and leads to better breastfeeding outcomes in the short and long term. Should results be positive and robust, they could form the scientific basis for improving the overall medical protocol of caesarean sections. This would have the potential to help mothers worldwide achieve their breastfeeding goals.

The study has been developed by Prof. Dr. med. Sven Wellmann from the UKBB and PD Dr. med. Tilo Burkhardt from the USZ. It will be conducted at five locations in Switzerland over three years: UKBB, USZ, University Hospital Basel, Cantonal Hospital Baden and Cantonal Hospital St. Gallen.

“Just prior to a caesarean section, we would induce mild labour”, says Prof. Dr. med. Sven Wellmann, Vice-Chair Neonatology at UKBB. “This would cause no pain or distress to the mother or baby, but still trigger the release of important hormones, which are beneficial for mother and child”.

“The study is of interest to FLRF for several reasons: It aims to scientifically confirm initial observations, its findings can be implemented globally, and hence, it has the ability to positively affect breastfeeding rates worldwide”, says Göran Larsson, Chairman of FLRF Board.

“The UKBB and USZ study offers a great opportunity for quickly integrating research findings and improving everyday medical practice”, adds Dr. Katharina Lichtner, Managing Director of FLRF. “This aligns precisely with our strategy of financing research that bridges the gap from basic research to practical implementation, leading to improved treatment protocols that decision-makers and health professionals can promote. This way we can create sustainable benefits for mothers and their children”.

University Children's Hospital Basel

The University Children's Hospital Basel is an independent university-based competence centre for paediatric and adolescent medicine as well as for teaching and research. It is one of the three independent children's hospitals in Switzerland. Thanks to its high-quality medical services, the UKBB ensures cantonal child and adolescent health care and also serves as a regional and national health care centre. The UKBB is one of the leading university centres for child and adolescent medicine in Switzerland.

www.ukbb.ch

Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation

The Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation is one of the first foundations in the world with a prime focus on promoting and supporting breast milk and breastfeeding. Based in Zug, Switzerland, it was founded in 2013 with the aim of promoting the scientific and public recognition of breastfeeding and human milk as – given the current state of science – the best nutrition for newborns and infants. It considers itself as an instigator and promoter of new knowledge. The Foundation invests globally in projects and scientific research in breastfeeding and breast milk. It places high value on multidisciplinary collaboration and supports projects with a sustainable impact on the well-being of mother and child.

www.larsson-rosenquist.org

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