CHAMPS Hospital Receives Human Milk from the Mothers’ Milk Bank of Mississippi

North Mississippi Medical Center’s (NMMC) Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) in Tupelo, Mississippi was the first CHAMPS hospital to receive human milk from the newly opened Mothers’ Milk Bank of Mississippi on December 22, 2015. The nonprofit milk bank announced it passed formal inspection by the Human Milk Banking Association of North America and began processing milk donated by Mississippi mothers in early December 2015.

Sabrina Ganaway, RN, IBCLC, Lactation Consultant at NMMC, shared her perspective on the Mothers’ Milk Bank of Mississippi: “I feel such a sense of pride for our state, for the MS milk bank opening . . . Having a ‘home state’ milk bank makes this more a personal journey for our hospital and NICU . . . It feels good to be able to say, I know this milk bank is run under the strictest of standards because I know who those people are.”

Sabrina says that the opening of the milk bank, and their neonatologists becoming familiar with what a milk bank operation entails, has had an unexpected impact on their NICU: “[Our neonatologists] have taken more accountability to counsel mothers on the importance of their own milk, and are taking a more proactive approach to encourage mothers to furnish their milk for their baby. Not because they don’t want to use donor milk, but because they have become even more aware [of] human milk’s benefits, [and] even more [aware of] the benefits of gestation-specific milk for the premie baby.”

Research shows that human milk is life-saving, especially for infants who are preterm or who have special medical challenges and illnesses. According to the March of Dimes, Mississippi leads the nation in the number of preterm births. Currently 12.9% of all births, and over 15% of births in Hinds County, are premature. That translates to more than 5,000 premature babies born each year in the state.

According to Linda Pittman, Executive Director of the milk bank, “We need donations from as many mothers as possible to be able to dispense milk for all the precious babies in need in our Mississippi NICUs. This will be an ongoing need with the high number of preterm infants in our state.”

Ways CHAMPS Hospitals and Individuals Can Get Involved:

1. **If you have an NICU, use human milk!** If you want more information, Mothers’ Milk Bank of MS personnel will go to your hospital and provide education for physicians and decision-makers on what is involved in using human milk.

2. **Promote the Mothers’ Milk Bank of MS with patients. The milk bank needs donor moms!** Mothers who are interested in donating milk should contact the Mothers’ Milk Bank by emailing Linda Pittman (linda@msmilkbank.org; 601-613-0531) to determine if they are eligible. Each donor must first be screened through a telephone interview. Once she is assigned a donor number, she may drop off her
milk at one of the depots after contacting them. Donors also need to undergo a blood test (paid for by the milk bank). This helps ensure that the milk is safe for vulnerable infants. Milk that is accepted for donation is processed at the milk bank in Flowood, and is then analyzed and cultured before dispensed to NICUs across the state.

3. Consider being a milk bank depot. The process is easy and involves very little on the part of the hospital—basically providing a freezer for moms to drop off milk. You can contact Linda Pittman (linda@msmilkbank.org; 601-613-0531) for more details, and she will provide guidance. A hospital is a great place for a milk bank depot and it really heightens the importance of breastfeeding for the entire community. The following cities currently have depots for mothers in the community to drop off donated milk: Tupelo, Oxford, Columbus, Gulfport, and Hattiesburg.

4. Become knowledgeable! “Like” the Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/mothersmilkbankofmississippi/. There are frequent stories of moms and babies who benefited from human milk, as well as milk bank activities that hospital staff might want to support or participate in (for example, the annual 5K "Milk Run" on the Coast; last October NICU nurses at CHAMPS hospital Gulfport Memorial participated in that race to help support the milk bank).

5. Consider contributing funds to the milk bank. There are always ongoing needs. The milk bank is a nonprofit entity and it is a costly venture to process and disseminate human milk.

To learn more, visit the website or follow the Facebook™ page for the Mothers’ Milk Bank of Mississippi. For volunteer opportunities, contact Linda Pittman at 601-613-0531 or linda@msmilkbank.org.