Abstract:

Background:
Breastfeeding is crucial for all infants, especially those born prematurely. This retrospective study aims to monitor specific metrics as part of the National Neonatal Audit Program in 2023. It focuses on determining whether babies born before 34 weeks gestation received any of their mother's breast milk at both day 14 and upon discharge.

Methods:
Out of 35 preterm infants initially considered, 5 were excluded from the study; Data from the remaining 30 infants were collected and analyzed to determine compliance with these two key measures.

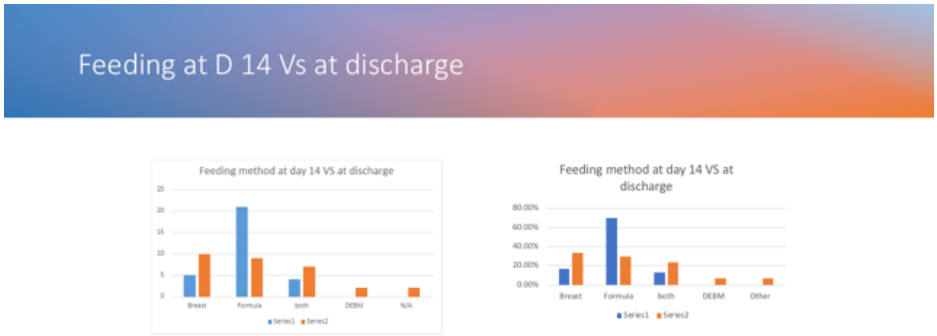
Results:
The results of this study are noteworthy. Among the 30 infants included in the analysis at day 14, a substantial 56.6% received some amount of their mother's breast milk. However, it's important to highlight that this percentage decreased significantly to 30% by the time of discharge.
The reasons identified for the decrease in breastfeeding rates among preterm infants are quite common and highlight some of the challenges faced by mothers in NICU settings. These reasons include:

1. **Difficulty in Expressing Milk:** Mothers often find it challenging to continue expressing breast milk regularly, especially when their babies are in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The stress and emotional strain of having a preterm infant in NICU can impact their ability to maintain a consistent pumping schedule.

2. **Insufficient Milk Production Concerns:** Some mothers may worry that their breast milk production is inadequate to meet their baby's needs. This concern can lead to uncertainty about whether breast milk alone is sufficient for their preterm infants.

3. **Lack of Available Milk:** In certain cases, mothers may face difficulties in producing enough breast milk, leading to concerns about the availability of milk for their babies.

These findings emphasize the importance of providing comprehensive support and education to mothers with preterm infants in NICU settings. This support can include lactation consultation, guidance on expressing milk effectively, and addressing concerns about milk production. By addressing these challenges, healthcare providers can help increase breastfeeding rates and provide the best possible nutrition and health benefits to preterm infants.



Conclusion:

Based on our findings, we propose the following recommendations to improve compliance with these measures in preterm infants:

1. Increase awareness regarding the significance of breastfeeding through the distribution of brochures, posters, and educational materials to both parents and healthcare providers.
2. Implement an exclusive breast milk (EBM) package for mothers during consultation, providing them with the necessary resources and support for successful breastfeeding.
3. Incorporate the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) into the induction process for all healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and midwives, to promote a breastfeeding-friendly environment within the neonatal unit.

These recommendations aim to enhance the early and sustained provision of breast milk to preterm infants, aligning with the goals of the National Neonatal Audit Program 2023. Further research and continuous monitoring are essential to evaluate the impact of these interventions on compliance with the specified measures.

This retrospective study, conducted as part of the National Neonatal Audit Program 2023, precisely examined two critical measures: whether infants born at less than 34 weeks gestation received any of their mothers' milk at day 14 and at discharge. The study period spanned from April 1, 2023, to June 30, 2023, utilizing data from the Badgernet.