

## Fifty-fourth WHA Resolution



ARUN GUPTA  
MD, FIAP  
Guest Editor

The August issue of JIMA, 2002 has been devoted to Infant and Young Child Feeding particularly after the 54th World Health Assembly (WHA) passed a landmark resolution on May 18, 2001 at Geneva, issuing a firm call in support of exclusive breastfeeding of infants for first 6 months of age.

The new World Health Assembly Resolution, Infant and Young Child Nutrition, 54.2 in para 2(4) urges Member States to strengthen activities and develop new approaches to protect, promote and support exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months as a public health recommendation, taking into account the findings of the WHO expert consultation on optimal duration of exclusive breastfeeding, and to provide safe and appropriate complementary foods, with continued breastfeeding for up to two years of age or beyond, emphasising channels of social dissemination of these concepts in order to lead communities to adhere to these practices.

The Resolution also contains important protective clauses regarding baby food industry's promotional practices such as health claims and internet advertising and addresses other issues such as human rights.

The Resolution settles a 7-year-old controversy over the two most critical aspects of infant feeding – the optimal duration for exclusive breastfeeding and the marketing of complementary foods for infants. Clarity on these issues will support policies aiming to improve infant health and decrease rates of mortality and morbidity globally.

It is significant that this Resolution was passed on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes. Members of IBFAN and Consumers International from all continents were present at the WHA and strongly championed the cause for the adoption of the "6-month exclusive breastfeeding norm".

It is cheering that the accumulating evidence on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding has at last led to a change in global policy and there is global agreement on this issue. The clear recommendations will allow mothers to achieve the best practice, as any ambiguity with regard to the optimum duration of exclusive breastfeeding would have had an adverse impact on the breastfeeding promotion movement. The challenge before us is to reach all including people in every sphere of life.

In this issue of JIMA we have included several articles on this issue and hope you will find these useful in your day to day work. The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) would be willing to provide any further assistance through its Resource Center on Infant and Young Child Feeding Issues if you may need it.

It is heartening to see that this issue appears during the 10th anniversary of the BPNI, the national organisation that has led several initiatives on promotion of breastfeeding and one article does briefly describe its journey.

Further, 1st to 7th August is the World Breastfeeding Week, this year's slogan being Breastfeeding: Healthy Mothers and Healthy Babies. We are glad that JIMA is actively contributing to the cause of Breastfeeding/Infant and Young Child Feeding.

National Co-ordinator, BPNI, Delhi 110 088 and  
Guest Editor, JIMA, Kolkata 700 014

ARUN GUPTA