

## Al Bidayah Center in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

### Taken from an article written by Razan Baker

IN spite of the importance of breastfeeding and how studies have shown that the practice helps babies develop an immune system that prevents them from suffering various illnesses in the future, only two hospitals in the Kingdom are baby-friendly and encourage breastfeeding, said a leading Saudi breastfeeding consultant.

"We only have the Al-Shumaisi Hospital in the Eastern Province and the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center in Riyadh that encourage breastfeeding," said Breastfeeding Consultant Anne Batterjee, 57.

Anne is co-founder of the Al-Bidayah Center, which was established to spread awareness about breastfeeding. She has been running the center since November 2005 with the help of her two daughters Huda Batterjee, 26, and Modia Batterjee, 35.

"Al-Bidaya means the beginning. We want it to resemble that in all possible ways to help women come and spend some good, useful time," said Huda.

Anne believes that many people complain and are terrified of the possibility of suffering from illnesses. Unknown to them they have the cure but "unfortunately" do not take advantage of it. Anne is concerned that with hospitals being commercialized, formula feeding has been preferred over breastfeeding.

Nevertheless, the World Health Organization recommends mothers exclusively breastfeed at least for the first six months of a baby's life. At six months, complementary nutritious foods should be introduced and breastfeeding should preferably also be continued for two years and beyond.

According to the La Leche League International, an international authority on breastfeeding, breastfeeding has been shown to be a source of protection against many illnesses, including ear infections, upper and lower respiratory ailments, allergies, intestinal disorders, colds, viruses, staph, strep, e-coli infections, diabetes, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, many childhood cancers, meningitis, pneumonia, urinary tract infections, salmonella, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) as well as lifetime protection from Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, some lymphomas, insulin dependent diabetes, and for girls, breast and ovarian cancer.

Oman has already managed to make all of its hospitals baby-friendly by encouraging breastfeeding, said Anne, who wants the Kingdom to follow suit.

Anne also spoke about the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action, which on the first week of August last year celebrated World Breastfeeding Week and 25 years of protecting breastfeeding. She added that The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action says that breastfeeding in the first hour of birth saves the lives of a million babies.

Huda added that in order to spread awareness, the Batterjee family has developed new ideas and aim to encourage women to adopt healthy lifestyles by providing them with evidence-based information in a supportive and positive environment. The Al-Bidayah Center offers courses on CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), heart saving, first aid, peer counseling, breastfeeding and the basics of nutrition. They also offer a range of prenatal education classes on the basics of breastfeeding, pregnancy, childbirth and yoga.

Modia works closely with the mothers as a lactation consultant; she is one of the only International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) in the private health care sector of the Kingdom. Modia enjoys her consultation visits and spends many hours with the mothers on the phone after that providing the support and proper information they need to continue breastfeeding.

Anne, Huda and Modia continue with their efforts to one day see breastfeeding become evermore popular.