

Policies to Support Lactation at Highly Ranked US Medical Schools

Ashley Vo, Lekshmi Santhosh, MD, MAEd; Caroline Wick, BA; Michelle Mourad, MD; Urmimala Sarkar, MD, MPH; Reshma Jagsi, MD, DPhil; Christina Mangurian, MD, MAS

BACKGROUND

Although the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for at least 2 years, lactating physicians encounter multiple barriers preventing personal attainment of this goal. This study aims to examine lactation-support policies at leading US schools of medicine (SOMs).

METHODS

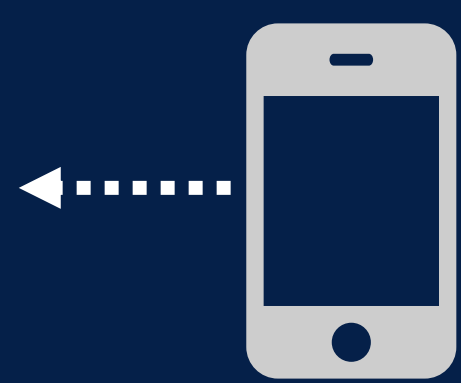
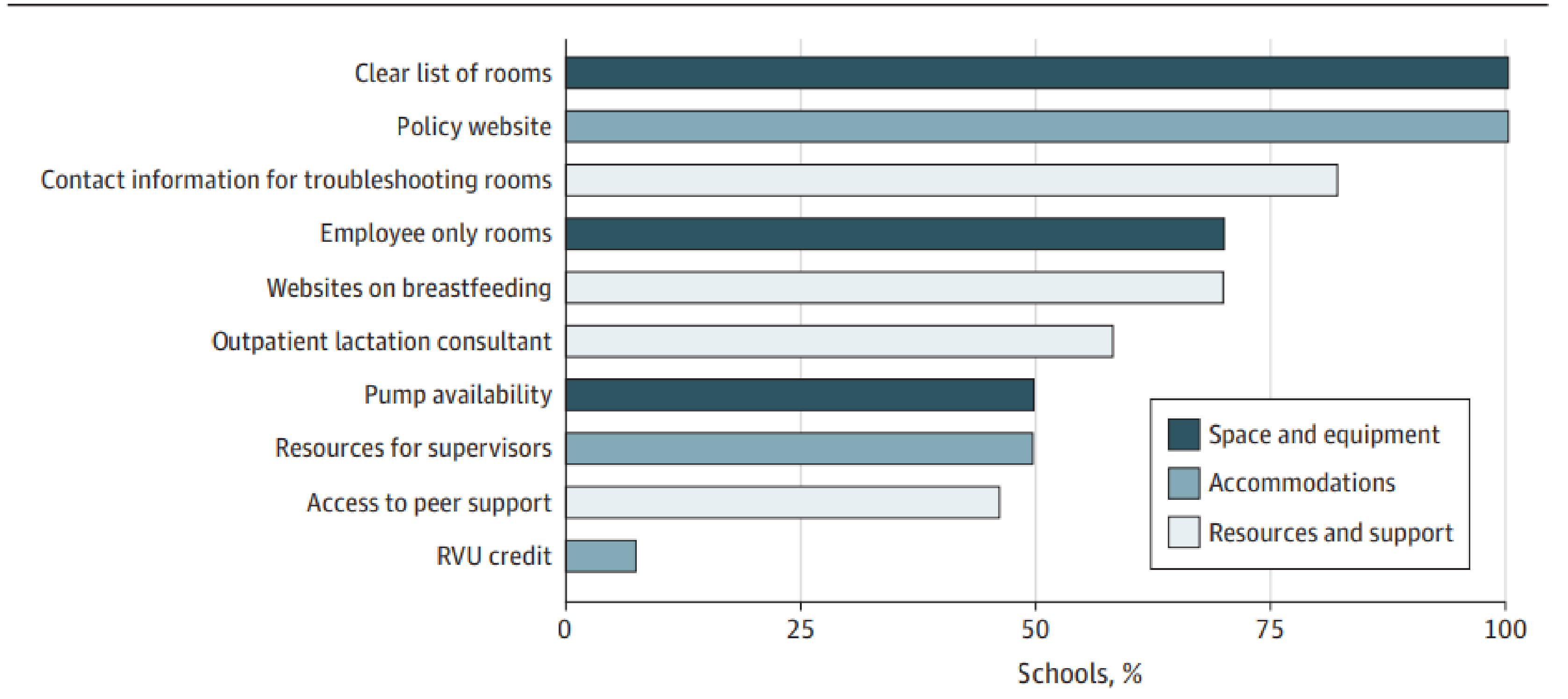
Cross section study examining constitutional lactation-support policies from the top 50 US SOM per 2022 US News and World Report Rankings. We evaluated policies systematically for the following categories:

Space/equipment	Pump availability, employees only rooms, clear list of rooms
Accommodations	Resources for supervisors, policy/resource website, RVU credit
Resources/support	Outpatient lactation consultant, websites on breastfeeding resources, peer support, facilities support number

Policies were verified directly with the institution, and descriptive statistics were conducted in Microsoft Excel and used to analyze the results.

Only 4 institutions (8%) provided financial incentives to make up for clinical time lost while lactating.

Figure. Lactation-Support Services Provided by Top 50 US Schools of Medicine (N = 50)



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RESULTS

Forty-seven SOMs (94%) had publicly available website information, and 50 (100%) had a clear list of lactation rooms and clearly posted institutional lactation policies. Additionally, 35 SOMs (70%) had employee-only lactation rooms and 25 (50%) provided pumps. Twenty-five SOMs (50%) provided toolkits for supervisors to support employees, 29 (58%) provided outpatient lactation consultant supports, and 23 (43%) provided peer support. Furthermore, 41 SOMs (82%) had an easily accessible contact if there were issues with facilities, and 35 (70%) linked to websites about troubleshooting common lactation challenges.

DISCUSSION

While all 50 SOMs had online lactation-support policies, the provision of break-time accommodations was limited. This study's limitations include its focus on the top 50 US SOMs, limiting generalizability, and reliance on publicly available website data. Nevertheless, manually verifying information with school representatives enhances data validity. Our findings highlight variations in lactation accommodations among leading US SOMs, emphasizing the need for comprehensive lactation accommodation programs to promote gender equity and reproductive justice in medicine. Such programs should encompass structural support, peer support, and easily accessible accommodation policies for employees and managers.