



A WORLDWIDE NETWORK OF LACTATION PROFESSIONALS

March 6, 2008

Letters to the Editor
The New York Times
620 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10018

Dear Editor,

The International Lactation Consultant Association would like to express our thanks for running the article, “And Doula Makes Four,” by Pamela Paul, which appeared in the Sunday, March 2 edition of the New York Times. We are especially pleased that the article pointed out the difference between the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC), which is the only accredited credential for lactation consultants, and the confusing array of initials awarded to those who have attended a one-time education session and received a certificate. While there are various pathways to qualify for the IBCLC, the one described in the article (2500 clinical hours and 45 hours of course work) also requires a college bachelor’s degree.

Standardization and oversight of health care providers is absolutely essential. Currently there are more than 16,000 IBCLCs in 70 countries of the world, and these credentialed professionals operate under standards of practice, a code of ethics, and must recertify every 5 years by continuing education and every 10 years by exam. Lactation consultants also work in concert with the mother’s physician, nurses, and other health care professionals who form her “circle of care.”

Lactation consultants help mothers with a wide variety of breastfeeding questions and concerns. At the heart of our work is a commitment to helping mothers reach whatever breastfeeding goals they have set for their family through evidence-based care.

To find an IBCLC in your community, mothers can visit the “Find a Lactation Consultant Directory” at www.ilca.org. If you are unsure as to whether your “lactation consultant” is truly a current credentialed IBCLC, you can check the online registry of IBCLCs at www.iblce.org.

On behalf of the International Lactation Consultant Association,

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President
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