



**POSITION STATEMENT OF THE
PHILIPPINE SOCIETY OF NEWBORN MEDICINE, INC. (PSNBMI) ON THE
CARE OF THE NEWBORNS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
July 30, 2021**

The Philippine Society of Newborn Medicine, Inc. (PSNBMI), in accordance with the most current recommendations of the WHO, the UNICEF and the DOH, on the care of the newborn during the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, hereby recommends strict infection prevention and control at all levels of care and supports the following protocols and procedures:

1. **Non-separation** of the clinically stable mother with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection from her newborn, enabling the provision of her *“Unang Yakap”* and initiation of breastfeeding as soon as possible after delivery, with strict compliance with infection prevention and control (IPC) measures
2. **Kangaroo mother care (KMC)** for stable premature and low birth weight newborns (their COVID-status notwithstanding), as soon as feasible and for as long as possible, with similar IPC measures
3. **Rooming in or co-location** of stable mother-infant dyads with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection (with strict maternal compliance to IPC measures), to provide the benefits of continued breastfeeding, which far outweighs the risks of morbidity and mortality due to COVID-19 infection
4. **Direct exclusive breastfeeding**, as current evidence has not established the transmission of SARS-COV-2 virus through breastmilk to cause COVID-19 infection in the newborn. COVID-19 antibodies, however, were found in breastmilk of mothers who had the infection and those who had been vaccinated against the disease, thus reinforcing breastmilk as the optimal source of nutrition for their babies. If direct breastfeeding is not feasible due to critical maternal or neonatal illness, it is recommended to assist the mother to express her own milk for neonatal nutrition and to maintain her milk production. If mother’s own milk (MOM) is not available, pasteurized donor milk (PDM) should be the source of temporary feeding for the newborn.

We aim to bring all stakeholders together to raise the level of awareness and responsibility to protect, promote and support exclusive breastfeeding, especially in disaster and emergency situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. This is also a call for a multi-disciplinary approach to sustain an enabling environment that will likewise protect the mother-baby dyad against unethical marketing practices of industries that undermine breastfeeding. Health systems and institutional policies should adapt and support these recommendations as these are the best investments for saving lives and fostering health, social and economic development of individuals and nations during this critical time.