

## **HIV and Breastfeeding — An Alternative**

In the recent 'viewpoint', Dr. Balsekar states that in neonates of HIV infected mothers, the risk of death due to artificial feeding would be much lower than the 14% death risk due to HIV infection attributable to breastfeeding(1). He recommends that HIV positive mothers be advised against breastfeeding their infants. This leaves us with two alternatives: (i) Utilizing expressed breastmilk (EBM) of HIV positive mothers which can be pasteurized to inactivate the HIV virus; and (ii) High cost, safe formula feeds prepared and given in a

sterilized way. In my opinion, the former alternative merits consideration. HIV is a aathermolabile virus being inactivated in 30 min at 56°C and in less than a second at 100° C. If we can pasteurize the expressed breastmilk (EBM) by Flash method (72°C for 15-20 seconds and cool it in a waterbath at 13°C). we may be able to inactivate the virus and safely use the EBM for the baby.

**R. Selvan,**

*Deepam Hospital,  
230 Gandhiji Road,  
Erode 638 002.*

### **REFERENCE**

1. Balsekar MV. HIV and breastfeeding. *Indian Pediatr* 1996; 33:1027-1028.