SUMMARY

The method of infant feeding to adopt for the newborn is a major decision to make for the HIV Positive mother. This is made more difficult by the socio-cultural influences these women have to contend with in making these decisions.

A longitudinal prospective study of the factors influencing the choice of infant feeding, among HIV Positive mothers attending PMTCT clinic in Plateau State Specialist Hospital, Jos was done.

HIV Positive Mothers between 20 years and 40 years of age were enrolled following their informed consent. One hundred and seventy nine mothers were enrolled and 152 of the eligible mothers participated and completed the study. These mother-infant pairs were followed up at six weeks of birth.

Many factors were found to influence the choice of infant feeding among the HIV Positive mothers; these included the fear of stigmatization, the fear of HIV transmission, the cost of infant formula and infant feeding counselling by health workers.

In the actual practice of infant feeding, these mothers faced various challenges ranging from family pressures and stigmatization, to cost of infant formula and health worker influence. These challenges forced some mothers to change their initial method of infant feeding to other forms, with attendant consequences.

From the foregoing, there is a need to identify which infant feeding options, under individual and local circumstances would save the most lives, be the most feasible, be the least costly to the
society, and have the fewest negative effects. It is therefore necessary to intensify counselling in order to meet cultural needs and prevent stigmatization.