INTRODUCTION:
The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends all mothers to breastfeed their babies exclusively from birth to 6 months and to continue breastfeeding with complementary foods up to 2 years or longer. Penang Adventist Hospital is the first private hospital in the Northern region of Peninsula Malaysia to be accredited as Baby Friendly Hospital. In the past 8 years, the hospital has made a conscious effort to promote breastfeeding by enforcing the “10 steps to successful breastfeeding”, as recommended by WHO/UNICEF Innocenti Declaration in 1990.

METHOD/PURPOSE:
One way to promote a health behaviour such as breastfeeding is through education. Thus, PAH introduces the Antenatal Course which consists of 10 contact hours, spread over 4 days. The goals of the course are first to prepare first time mothers mentally and psychologically to nurse and take care of their baby. Secondly to impart skills and knowledge that will enhance the mother’s overall ante-natal experience.

RESULTS
Our antenatal courses have received positive feedback so far. In 2013, we educated 94 couples, of whom 80% were PAH patients. 97% of them were first time parents. Mothers learnt how to nurse their baby by using a mannequin where they were taught how to carry and position their baby during breastfeeding. Other well-received hands-on components are: a) the Prenatal & Relaxation Exercises where husbands are taught how to give their partners a back massage during labour to help them relax. b) The Baby Bath demonstration where couples learn first-hand how to bathe a newborn baby. c) Diaper practice: fathers-to-be learn to bathe babies and change their nappies.

CONCLUSION
Our entire pediatrician team at the hospital is fully committed to helping mothers breastfeed their babies. The course is taught by an interdisciplinary team which includes obstetrician & gynecologists, pediatricians, anesthesiologist, dietitian, lactation nurse, physiotherapist and health educators. Many other services have been added on over the years to promote and encourage the continuity of exclusive breastfeeding. The antenatal course is the first step towards helping our pregnant patients adopt a health promoting practice that is good for both mothers and child.

COMMENT
The Antenatal Course covers a wide range of topics besides breastfeeding; it includes delivery and care of the new born. For example:
• Pain Relief in Labour
• Video on Epidural Anaesthesia
• Prenatal & Relaxation Exercises
• Breathing Techniques in Labour
• Immunization & Minor Problems during infancy
• Baby Bath Demonstration

Participants appreciate the practical aspect of the course. Health education such as this empowers our patients to go through the child labor experience and beyond (care of new born, breastfeeding etc) with pertinent knowledge and skills.

Authors: Yen Ang, MPH, RD, ACSM; Pong Kwai Meng, FRCOG, FRCS, FRCPE, FRCP, FRCP(UK), MBBS; Chun Teik Lan, SRN, SCM, DIMP; Tay Pai Lim, RN.

PENANG ADVENTIST HOSPITAL
Operated by Adventist Hospital & Clinic Services (M) (255697-M)
465, Jalan Burma, 10350 Penang, Malaysia
Tel: (+604) 222 7200     LoCall: 1-300-88-4325     Fax: (+604) 228 0443
E-mail: enquiry@pah.com.my     Website: www.pah.com.my     Facebook: fb.com/pahpg