

A call from the White House

Among the visitors doing business at the White House in August was the pediatrics clerkship director from the Orlando regional campus, there to discuss one key element in the federal government's effort to reduce obesity among children: breastfeeding.

Joan Y. Meek, M.D., was invited to Washington in her role as chair of the United States Breastfeeding Committee. In their meeting with policy advisors to first lady Michelle Obama, she and others who are connected with the committee emphasized that increasing the initiation and duration of breastfeeding could aid in preventing obesity.

Among other topics, they also addressed provisions in the Affordable Care Act that require employers to provide workplace time and space for breastfeeding. They talked about having the White House and federal agencies becoming role models as Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces. Representatives from the U.S. Department of Labor and Department of Agriculture also were there, she said.

In June, Meek also met with the U.S. surgeon general, Dr. Regina Benjamin. Soon, the surgeon general is expected to release a Call to Action on Breastfeeding Support.

"Multiple studies have shown that a history of not breastfeeding increases the risk of being overweight or obese in childhood and adolescence," Meek stated earlier this year. "Adolescent obesity often persists into adult life. Breastfeeding plays an important role in obesity prevention and improving overall health outcomes, and therefore is vitally important to public health."



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Dr. Joan Meek, right, teaches Florida State medical students from the Orlando Campus and is a nationally recognized expert and advocate for breastfeeding.