



Ms. Silke Mader

European Foundation for the Care
of Newborn Infants

Silke Mader is the Chairwoman of the Executive Board and co-founder of EFCNI. Her professional background lies in elementary educational theory, mainly focusing on the linguistic support of migrant children and remedial educational theory.

In 1997, her twins were born in the 25th week of pregnancy, and were not given the appropriate care. Unfortunately, one of them died a few days after birth, leaving the parents and the sibling behind. During her time in hospital and afterwards, she was faced with the non-existence of support of any kind, the absence of public awareness and the lack of information and education for parents during pregnancy. She felt that no parents should ever undergo such an awful experience again. Therefore, in 1999, she decided to actively participate in the Munich-based local parent group, which she headed from 2001 on. Two years later, she became Chairwoman of the German umbrella organization “The preterm born child e. V.”. Together with experts, Silke developed declarations, guidelines and information material for parents with preterm children.

As the situation throughout Europe is distressingly similar and preterm children urgently need a voice not only within Europe but also worldwide, she decided to give up her job as a teacher and to take on the role of chair on the Executive Board of EFCNI.

In 2012 Silke Mader was awarded the “Prix Courage” by ZDF television programme “ML

mona lisa” in cooperation with the cosmetics company Clarins. 2013 she received the Medal for Particular Services to Bavaria in a United Europe. Since 2014 she is Honorary Lecturer at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen’s University Belfast, Northern Ireland.

In 2015, Silke Mader has been awarded as social entrepreneur and Ashoka Fellow. Since then, she has become a member of the organization’s global network.

At the ALL Ladies League (ALL) – Women Economic Forum 2016 in New Delhi, India, Silke Mader received the “Iconic Innovative Trailblazer of the Decade” award.

Breastfeeding a preterm infant in the NICU – the unmet needs for parents

For parents of a preterm infant everyday life turns upside-down from one day to another with tremendous challenges and unexpected situations. During that burdensome circumstance families need much more than medical care and support – parents in particular require to be empowered and involved in their parental role from the beginning.

A growing number of studies show the benefit of family centered care and the importance of breastmilk for preterm infants. To provide breastmilk for her preterm born baby is one of the most important and emotional issues a mother can do. It has been shown that breastmilk can prevent necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC) and other health issues of a preterm baby and, can have an influence on the IQ as well as on the relationship between the mother and her child later in life. Breastmilk is the “golden drop”, but to provide this high quality nutrition for those fragile babies hospitals not only need space and equipment – there also has to be available high quality nutrition for the mothers to provide this important “golden nutria”. However in many children hospitals and especially in Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU) parents and other closed family members are still seen as visitors and not as parents of the tiny patient. Just a few NICUs provide space for parents to stay overnight or have a comfortable chair available to get rest, sleep or sit at the bedside of their baby. Most of the children hospitals offer no food for parents during their baby stays in the NICU. They spend often the whole day in the NICU – for weeks and months. An appropriate balanced diet

for parents, especially for mothers, during the baby’s time at the hospital would be the basic prerequisite for the healthy nutrition of a preterm baby. A lack of specialised health professionals regarding breastfeeding as well as adequate and understandable information to support mothers of preterm infants are often further challenges for many families, but also for the NICUs. Growing evidence for the benefit of breastmilk is founded and published in the meanwhile, but several unmet needs especially at the structural level have to be tackled in the future to ensure a healthy start in life for preterm infants.

The European Foundation for the Care of Newborn Infants (EFCNI) collaborates with scientific and health professional societies as well as parent organisations to improve preterm and newborn health in Europe in a sustainable way. Silke Mader and team members of EFCNI are involved in many research programmes and studies, having functions in the boards of different societies as patient representatives.