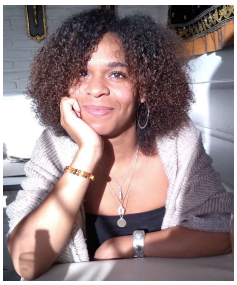
ELACTA Conference 2026, Bucharest



Written by Robyn Leah Nalty IBCLC
LCGB volunteer Trustee & MIYCF-E/ EDI Lead

I was invited as a represent LCGB as a Trustee at ELACTA's 14th biannual Conference, *Breastfeeding Insights Shaping the Future*, in Bucharest, Romania. On the Pre-Conference Day, I delivered an oral abstract presentation on ethical frameworks during emergencies for infant feeding and formula donations, as well as attended the ELACTA Member Associations Presidents' meeting. The main conference took place on the 15th and 16th of May, featuring a host of incredible topics and talks.

Conference Presentation Write Up:

Title - Shifting the Narrative: How IBCLCs Can Combat AI and Digital Disinformation

At the main conference, Jeanette McCulloch, IBCLC, delivered a timely presentation on a modern challenge facing every lactation professional: navigating the explosion of health disinformation and AI products being built to target the perinatal period and new parents. Often sold to parents as tools of ease and relief, many AI-driven assessment apps provide answers that are marginally or largely wrong - yet exhausted parents often lack the tools to decipher these inaccuracies.

The presence of digital marketing for commercial milk formulas directly in the pockets and homes of new parents is immense. Jeanette shared that research shows 64% of mothers are exposed to systematic formula promotion online, and up to 28% of social media content in this space is outright misinformation. Furthermore, when parents turn to AI spaces, they report feeling as though they are confiding in a trusted friend, making them highly vulnerable to extreme, fear-triggering language and false dichotomies (such as breast vs. bottle).

McCulloch emphasised that our response as lactation professionals must shift from reactive *debunking* to proactive *prebunking* - forewarning parents and building their resilience to manipulation techniques before they encounter them. Key elements of effective media education should focus on positive framing (highlighting what works rather than amplifying fear), persistent repetition over time, and "sticky", memorable messaging.

When communicating online or directly with clients, our messaging should be guided by six core principles:

- **Simple:** Stripped to the core message.
- **Unexpected:** Using counterintuitive angles to capture attention.
- **Concrete:** Sensory and specific.
- **Credible:** Backed by specific facts that establish authority.
- **Emotional:** Driven by genuine emotion, as feelings - not facts alone - drive behaviour.
- **Stories:** Using storytelling as the primary delivery mechanism for critical information.

We need to lead with facts first, as genuine emotion follows truth rather than the manufactured feelings often generated by AI algorithms. Prebunking - having conversations ahead of exposure - consistently outperforms debunking after the fact. As lactation professionals, we can provide parents with practical strategies to recognise frequently used online manipulation techniques. For example, we can prepare them by saying, *"You might come across extreme, fear-triggering language,"* or pointing out that *"If something is presented as all-or-nothing, it is likely missing vital context and information."*

When addressing misinformation directly, we should adopt the **Fact–Myth–Fallacy–Fact** framework from *The Debunking Handbook 2020*:

1. **Lead with the Fact:** Start clearly with the core truth.
2. **Warn about the Myth:** Introduce the misinformation without giving it undue weight.
3. **Explain the Fallacy:** Detail exactly why the claim is manipulative, cherry-picked, or incorrect.
4. **Reinforce the Fact:** Re-state the core truth and provide a clear, actionable next step.

Instead of leaving parents to panic over an app's algorithmic warning, prebunking allows us to plant a seed of healthy skepticism. By empowering parents to recognise manipulated data, we can ensure that when an app, AI, or online source tells them something worrying, their first instinct is to turn back to real, human, specialist support.