D. Summary and Recommendations

68. A healthy full-term infant is alert at birth and its alertness increases day-by-day. When placed on its mother's abdomen at birth it can hear its mother's heartbeats that it has listened to for several months while *in utero*. They are less distinct now because they are beyond the barrier of its mother's adbominal wall, but they are audible nevertheless. If the heartbeats are less audible, the mother's voice is more audible as she whispers words of endearment into its ears. Having listened to that voice for several months, it is the only sound that is familiar to the child's ears. Frequently hospital routine and convenience are placed ahead of the mother-child bond. Premature children pose a very special problem: their medical safety demands that they be isolated in a sterile environment while their emotional and later physical health requires that they spend as much time as possible with their mothers.

69. Recommendations

6. We recommend that Hospital Boards and Hospital Administrations

a) ensure that hospitalization procedures encourage the mother-child bond as soon as possible after delivery, and encourage the early initiation of breast-feeding;

b) ensure that practices involving the donation of free samples of infant formula do not discourage breast-feeding which ideally should continue until the baby is at least four months old;

c) permit parents to maintain maximum contact with their baby in hospital; and

d) provide special accommodation for the parents of premature infants in order to encourage as much as possible the development of parental-child bonding.

7. We recommend that the Unemployment Insurance Act be amended

a) to give reduced maternity benefits to a parent who adopts an infant; and

b) to allow the mother of a premature and/or hospitalized newborn to interrupt her maternity leave after childbirth and to resume it when the infant comes home from the hospital.

8. We recommend that physicians and hospital staff

a) make every effort to identify the high risk child at birth; and