Why Mammals Suck

October 16th @ 7:00pm

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Since 2002, Professor Hinde has investigated the first substance a mammal has evolved to consume: mother's milk. In her Comparative Lactation Lab they investigate how mother’s milk contributes to infant development and behavior in socially complex taxa. In addition to journal publications, Hinde co-edited “Building Babies: Primate Developmental Trajectories in Proximate and Ultimate Perspective” released by Springer in 2013. Hinde is an associate editor and writer for SPLASH! Milk Science Update, executive council member for the International Society for Research in Human Milk and Lactation, and showcases research on mother’s milk, breastfeeding, and lactation for the general public, clinicians, and researchers at her blog “Mammals Suck… Milk!”

Milk is abundant at our local grocery store in the form of dairy products and infant formulas. This ubiquity of homogenized milk in our modern environment has the potential for the general public, and even researchers, to think of milk one dimensionally. Milk is not just food, however, but is also medicine and signal. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of other milk “bioactives” affect the infant. Here I will present emerging research that addresses the magnitude, sources, and consequences of inter-individual variation in mother’s milk including that the “recipe” for milk can be different for sons and daughters.