Parental Interaction in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

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Problem
• Without adequate parent-child interaction, NICU parents cannot make a smooth transition to full caregiver upon discharge.
• Parents’ comfort level is diminished which will lead to more calls to their pediatrician.
• There may be a lack of experience by parents resulting in feeding issues and poor weight gain.
• The issues listed above may result in greater risk of hospital readmission.

Purpose
• Explore parents’ perspectives of interaction with their preterm infant during their NICU stay and identify interventions that aid in the transition from anxious bystanders to confident caregivers.

Literature Review
• Maternal stress and anxiety during the NICU stay can lead to altered maternal-infant interaction and decreased cognitive development of the toddler (Zelkowitx, 2010).
• Studies by Melnyk et al. (2006, 2008) demonstrated a relationship between parental interaction in the NICU and reduced stress and anxiety among families.
• Preterm infants are difficult to soothe, more irritable, and less responsive to interaction than full term infants that causes stress to both the parents and the infant (Tooten et al. 2012).
• Parental interaction in the NICU is necessary for developing good outcomes for infants. Involvement of the parents in the care of the infant and decisions of their infant leads to enhanced growth, development, and increased parental empowerment (Melnyk et al., 2006).

Methodology
• Sample: n = 25 parents of NICU infants
• Design: Quantitative Research
• Survey Tool: NICU Parent Interaction Survey
• Data Analysis: Frequencies and Percentages

Demographics of Participants
• Gestational age at birth ranged from 24 weeks to 41 weeks
  24-29 weeks - 28%
  30-33 weeks - 24%
  34-37 weeks - 36%
  38-41 weeks - 12%
• Education level of parents surveyed range:
  • Some high school education to a bachelors degree
• Race: Caucasian 56%
  African American 16%
  Hispanic 12%
  Other 8%

Results
• Parents of infants less than 35 weeks had greater concerns of caring for their infant after discharge.
• There was no correlation between parent interaction between their NICU child and presence of other children in the home.

NICU Parent Interaction Survey
(average scores)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall I am satisfied with my NICU experience</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am involved with the decisions regarding my babies care</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t feel comfortable touching my baby</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of diagnosis and medical equipment</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been encouraged to hold my baby skin to skin</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have concerns about caring for my baby upon discharge</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been encouraged to participate in my babies care: Changing diaper Taking temperature</td>
<td>4.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
• Even though the sample population was small and was not significant, the feedback from the participants was overall positive.
• It was noted that there was less encouragement from nursing staff to provide kangaroo care to infants greater than 36 weeks that may lead to decreased parental interaction.
• There was no evidence that leads us to believe decreased gestational age and birth weight lead to decreased parental interaction.