



# Psychosocial Care of the Family in the neonatal Unit

Julia Petty

# Admission to NICU

- It is well documented that admission of the new-born to the Neonatal Unit results has a significant impact on the family with many negative effects
  - Cleveland, 2008; Bystrova et al, 2009

# We need to understand & consider.....

- Attachment theory & principles of bonding
- Needs of the family in the Neonatal unit
- Causes of anxiety & stress
- Effects of admission to the Neonatal unit
- Strategies to reduce anxiety – including Developmental care and stimulation
- Promotion of Family centred care
- Cultural & religious considerations

# Causes of parental stress

- Disruption to family life / 'discontinuity' & separation
- Conflicts in partnership & lack of clarity in roles
- Loss of control / powerlessness reported by parents & 'suspended mothering'
- Hall and Brinchmann (2009)

# Sources of stress

- Personal / family factors e.g. personality, coping mechanisms, previous experiences
- Situational – the illness and uncertainty of the outcome
- Environmental - the Neonatal unit (physical environment) and psycho-social -appearance of the baby, communication / relationships
- (Heermann et al, 2005)

# The negative effects

- Significant fear & anxiety before and after discharge
- Interference with child-parent relationships & bonding
- Isolation
- Social and financial consequences of having a neonate in long term care
- (Wigert et al, 2006; Tran et al, 2009)

# Cultural considerations

- Translation services
- Information sheets
- Cultural differences in bonding behaviours across cultures
- Ethnicity & diversity to be acknowledged and considered in care planning
- Advocacy is vital in nursing care

# Culture and belief

- Consider the religious and cultural background of the family
- Particularly important in bereavement care
- Do not impose your own beliefs
- Written information in different languages is important
- Treat parents as individuals
- (NICE, 2010)

# What can we do ?

- Individualised developmental care to include the family
- Participation with parents – enable empowerment in parents to prevent loss of role (Mundy, 2010)
- Specific interventions- Positive touch & Skin-to-skin contact, parent diary, parent groups
- Community issues and support
  - (Beck et al, 2009; Blunt, 2009, Britton, 2009)



# What can we do ?

- Neonatal nurses need to reduce stress to avoid unresolved negative experiences, fearfulness and inexperience to provide proper nurturing
- Be aware of the potential negative effects
- Work within a model of care for parent participation.
- Integration of FCC in Neonatal Nursing
- Include family at all times
- Cockcroft, 2012

# Recommendations

- BLISS 'POPPY' Study (POPPY Steering Group, 2009)
- Providing a positive physical environment for babies, parents and staff (Redshaw and Hamilton, 2010)
- Developing policies to support parental contact and effective communication with parents.
- Facilitating effective information-giving to all parents, including asking parents for feedback on what works well for them (Blunt, 2009)
- Enabling parents to find the support they need from professionals and other parents.
- Focusing on bridging the gaps in care, using benchmarking to reduce variation in policies and practice and improve quality.

# Bereavement Support

- Providing bereavement support and involving parents in the care of their baby is good practice and of vital importance
- Guidance is now based on what bereaved parents have said they need
- What happens in hospital can affect severity and length of grieving as well as the ability to resume normality

# Further Reading

- Beck SA, Weis J, Greisen G, Anderson M, Zoffman V (2009) Room for family-centred care- a qualitative evaluation of a neonatal intensive care unit remodelling project. *Journal of Neonatal Nursing* 15 (3): 88-99
- BLISS - The Special care Baby Charity (2009) *The Bliss Baby Charter Standards*. BLISS, London
- <http://www.bliss.org.uk/improving-care/professional-development/>
- Blunt B (2009) Supporting Mothers in Recovery; Parenting Classes. *Neonatal Network* 28 (4): 231-235
- Brethauer M, Carey L (2010) Maternal Experience of Neonatal Jaundice. *The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing* 35 (1): 8-14
- Britton C, McCormick F, Renfrew M, Wade A, King S (2009) Support for Breastfeeding mothers. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, Issue Art. No.: CD001141. DOI: 10.1002/ 14651858.CD001141.pub3.
- Bystrova K, Ivanova V, Edhborg M *et al* (2009), Early Contact versus Separation: Effects on Mother–Infant Interaction One Year Later. *Birth* 36: 97–109
- Cleveland, J (2008) Parenting in the neonatal intensive care unit. *Obstet Gynecol Neonatal Nurs.* 37(6):666-91
- Cockcroft, S (2012) How can family centred care be improved to meet the needs of parents with a premature baby. *Journal of Neonatal Nursing*. 18, 105-110. <http://coinn2013.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Journal-of-Neonatal-Nursing-article-How-can-family-centered-care-be-improved-to-meet-the-needs-of-parents-with-a-premature-baby-in-neonatal-intensive-care.pdf>
- in neonatal intensive care?
- Hall EOC, Brinchmann BS (2009) Mothers of Preterm infants; Experience of space, tone and transfer in the neonatal care unit. *Journal of Neonatal Nursing* 15 (4):129-136

# Further Reading - continued

- Heermann A, Wilson M, Wilhelm A (2005) Mothers in the NICU: Outsider to Partner: Literature Review. *Pediatric Nursing* 31(3): 176-181
- Mundy CA (2010) Assessment of Family needs in Neonatal Intensive Care Units. *American Journal of Critical Care* 9(2): 156-163
- NICE (2010) Encouraging parental involvement in Care.  
<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qualitystandards/specialistneonatalcare/encouragingparentalinvolvementincare.jsp>
- Nyström K, Axelsson K (2002) Mothers' experience of being separated from their newborns. *Journal of Obstetric Gynecological and Neonatal Nursing* 31(3): 275-82
- POPPY Steering Group (2009) *Family-centred care in neonatal units; A summary of research results and recommendations from the POPPY project*. National Childbirth Trust, London. <http://www.poppy-project.org.uk/resources/Poppy+report+for+PRINT.pdf>
- Redshaw ME, Hamilton KE (2010) Family centred care? Families, information and support for parents in UK neonatal units. *Archives of Disease in Childhood Fetal and Neonatal Edition* 95: F365-368.  
<http://www.poppy-project.org.uk/resources/Arch+Dis+Child+Fetal+Neonatal+Ed-2010-Redshaw-adc.2009.163717.pdf>
- Tran C, Medhurst A, O'Connell B (2009) Support needs of parents of sick and/or preterm infants admitted to a neonatal unit. *Neonatal, Paediatric and Child Health Nursing* 12 (2): 12-17
- Veijola J, Mäki P, Joukamaa M, Läärä E, Hakko H, Isohanni M (2004) Parental separation at birth and depression in adulthood: a long-term follow-up of the Finnish Christmas Seal Home Children. *Psychological Medicine* 34: 357-362
- Wigert H, Johansson R, Berg M, Hellström AL (2006) Mothers' experiences of having their newborn child in a neonatal intensive care unit. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences* 20 (1): 35-41