Psychosocial Programs for NICU Parents: Rationale and Recommendations.

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Objectives

- Describe 1 yr. prevalence rates for PPD and PTSD in NICU parents and the child correlates of parental distress.
- Apply knowledge of the four trajectories of emotional recovery from potentially traumatic events (PTEs) to facilitate the psychosocial care of NICU parents.
- List the desirable components of NICU Psychosocial Programs for parents.
- Describe common experiences of high risk parents and suggestions for helping parents re-gain their emotional rhythm in the NICU and transitioning home.
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Richard North Patterson

“You Really Don’t Know Fear Until You Have Had Children.”
PTSD, 1 Year Prevalence

General Population, All PTEs: Women, 5.2%; Men, 1.8%

All Childbirths, 1 Year Postpartum: Mothers, Median = 2% (range: 0% - 14%); Online U.S. Survey: 9%

NICU Parents: Mothers, (5 Studies Report PTSD Prevalence from 15% to 53%). Fathers, (2 Studies Report PTSD Prevalence from 8% to 33%).
Depression, 1 Year Prevalence

General Population: Women, 8.6%; Men, 4.9%

All Childbirths: Mothers, 12%-14%, Fathers, 10%.

NICU Parents: Mothers, (4 Studies Report from 39%-63%); Fathers, (1 Study, 36% at 27 Days Postpartum).
Jerry Adler

Esquire, 1988: “What if Your Worst Nightmare Came True: A Father’s Tale”
Denise Sikorski

Mother of Premature Twins
Vicious Cycles Can Develop
Parental Distress Can Lead To Less Than Desirable Infant Development, which Can Result in Greater Parental Distress
Maternal PPD and PTSD Correlates in Babies

- Disruptions in Mothering (More Controlling and Less Sensitive Interactions)
- Impaired Cognition, esp. in Boys
- Sleeping and Eating Problems
- Behavior Problems (both Internalizing and Externalizing)
- Inappropriate Use of Health Care
Maternal Depression Correlates, Full-term Babies

- Relative R. Frontal EEG Activation, 3-6 mo.
- Elevated Norepinephrine and Cortisol, Lower Dopamine, day 1
- Lower Brazelton and Bayley Scores
- Impaired Infant Attachment at 18 mo.
- 40% Adolescent Depression at 16 yrs.
Paternal Depression

- More Likely to Spank 1 yr. Old Children
- Less Likely to Consistently Read to 1 yr. Old Children
- School-age Children More Likely to Have Oppositional Defiant/Conduct Disorders
Trajectories of Recovery

- Resilience
- Chronic
- Recovered
- Delayed
Bonanno et al., 2011, Ann. Rev. Clinical Psychology

Time since PTE

Level of Adjustment

Health

dysfunction

Chronic 5%-30%
Delayed 0%-015%
Recovered 15%-25%
Resilient 35%-65%

- Resilience: 32%
- Chronic: 20%
- Recovered: 27%
- Other: Moderate Symptom Intensity that Maintained Over 2 Years.
Estimates of NICU Parent Trajectories

- Chronic = 30%
- Resilient = 33%
- In Between: Experiencing Symptoms, but Not at the Level of a Disorder, Which may Still Develop
Screening for Emotional Distress in NICU Parents

- Psychologists in the NICU
- Breastfeeding, Kangaroo Care, and Developmental Care
- Parent Support Networks
- NICU Referral Networks for Psychotherapy, Psychiatry, Social Work
- Post-NICU Regional and National Support Networks
- A Parent’s View of the Evolving Culture of the NICU
Screening

- Depression (PPD)
- PTSD
- Evaluation of Parent-Infant Interactions
- Other Risk Factors
Clinical Interview for Parents of Premature Infants (CLIP)

and/or

Psychological Assessment Tool – NICU (PAT-NICU)

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Risk Factors: PPD and PTSD, Mothers

- Prior Mental Health Problems
- Low Social Support
- Young Age and Less Education
- Non-white Race and Poverty
- Multiple Births
- Poor Infant Health
Psychologists in NICU

www.nationalperinatal.org/nicupsychologists.php

- Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
- Magee-Womens Hospital, Pittsburgh
- Miami Children’s Hospital
- Columbia Presbyterian Children’s, NY
- U. of Kansas Medical Center
- Children’s Hospital of WI
NICU Psychologists, cont’d

- St. Charles Health Care, Bend, OR
- Oregon Health and Science University, Portland, OR
- Nationwide Children’s, Columbus, OH
- Alberta Health Services, Alberta, CA
- Cox Medical, Springfield, MO
- Kapio lani Med Center, Honolulu, HI
Teaching Parenting Competencies

- Breastfeeding
- Kangaroo Care
- Developmental Care
Parent Support Networks

- March of Dimes
- Family Advocacy Network of NPA: www.nationalperinatal/fan/php
Professional Referral Networks

Some Hospital Behavioral Health Depts. Have Therapists Perform Outpatient Work in the NICU
Post-NICU Referrals

Training Clinics in Academic Psychology Departments or Counseling Programs

Postpartum Support International (PSI)
Regional/National Parent Support

Preemie Parent Alliance is a network of nonprofit groups, comprising the family wing of the National Premature Infant Health Coalition.
Preemie Parent Alliance

- Fragile Beginnings
- Holding Tiny Hands
- Preemie World
- National Perinatal Assoc.
- Eli’s Hope
- Families Blossoming
It’s A Preemie Thing
Keep On Cookin

NICU Helping Hands
Nurtured By Design
Papas of Preemies
Preemies Today
Standing Still
Teenie Preemie
Saving Grace
Zoe Rose Foundation
Hand to Hold
Graham’s Foundation
Impotence

- Depression
- Jealousy
- Sexual
Anger

Toward the Medical Staff

Toward the Baby
Strategies for Helping Parents

- Normalize Emotional Reactions
- Awareness of Parental “Bargaining”
- Patience with “Parental Mistakes”
Janice Fialka

“Please Don’t Deny Our Despair. Just Be There with Us. If You Can’t Give Me Back My Dream, Help Me Through This Nightmare.”
The Evolving Culture of the NICU
Healing Relationships

Understanding, Empathy, Support, Compassion, Encouragement, Acceptance, Normalization, Validation of Feelings
THE FIELD OF NEONATOLOGY HAS EXPANDED BEYOND THE PRIMARY AIM OF SAVING INFANTS' LIVES TO MINIMIZING SURVIVORS' LONG-TERM COMPLICATIONS, AND THUS EXTENDING CLINICIANS' RESPONSIBILITIES BEYOND THE BABY TO THE BROADER FAMILY."

No More NICUs

The New Family Intensive Care Unit