abstract

OBJECTIVES: To demonstrate feasibility and estimate the effect of an intervention to increase parental involvement in infant pain management in the NICU on parents’ stress and postdischarge parenting competence and confidence.

METHODS: The study involved a randomized controlled trial. Parents recruited from 4 NICUs were randomly assigned by site to receive (1) a pain information booklet and instruction on infant comforting techniques (n = 84 intervention) in addition to a generic NICU care booklet or (2) the generic NICU care booklet alone (n = 85 control). The primary outcome was postintervention Parent Stressor Scale: NICU (PSS-NICU) scores. Secondary outcomes included parental attitudes about infant pain, nursing pain assessment, and parenting competence and role attainment after discharge.

RESULTS: No differences were found between groups in PSS-NICU scores. Significant differences favoring the intervention group were found for satisfaction with pain information, parents shown infant pain cues and comforting techniques, nursing pain assessment, and parent preference for involvement during painful procedures. Role attainment after discharge was higher for the intervention group than for the control group. Both the intervention and control groups highly valued attention to infant pain and wanted information and involvement.

CONCLUSIONS: These results provide no evidence of a reduction in NICU-related stress for parents who receive an intervention to increase their understanding and involvement in infant pain management. However, parents in the intervention group were better prepared to take an active role in infant pain care and had more positive views about their role attainment in the postdischarge period. Pediatrics 2011;128:510–518

AUTHORS. Linda S. Franck, PhD,1∗∗ Kate Oullivan, MA,∗ Sue Nderitu, SRN,∗ Magdalene Lim, MBA,∗ Swee Fang, MBBS,† and Anthony Kaiser, MD†

1School of Nursing, University of California, San Francisco, California; 2Institute of Child Health, University College, London, United Kingdom; 3Centre for Nursing and Allied Health Research, Great Ormond Street Hospital, London, United Kingdom; 4Neonatal Unit, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London, United Kingdom; 5NICU, PoederCBS, Barts and the London NHS Trust, London, United Kingdom; 6Neonatal Unit, Homerton Hospital, London, United Kingdom; and 7Neonatal Unit, Guy’s and St Thomas’ Hospitals, London, United Kingdom

KEY WORDS

NICU, neonates, parental stress, pain, randomized controlled trial

ABBREVIATIONS

PSS—Parent Stressor Scale
SICS—Self-efficacy in Infant Care Scale
WBPLR—What Being a Parent of a New Baby Is Like—Revised
CI—confidence interval

This trial has been registered at www.clinicaltrials.gov (identifier ISRCTN8704922).

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Address correspondence to Linda S. Franck, PhD, Department of Family Health Care Nursing, N411Y, Box 0606, 2 Koret Way, University of California, San Francisco, CA 94143. E-mail: linda.franck@nursing.ucsf.edu

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