

Parent Involvement in Pain Management for NICU Infants: A Randomized Controlled Trial



WHAT'S KNOWN ON THIS SUBJECT: Parents worry about the emotional and physical pain of hospitalized, high-risk infants, and this worry is associated with higher levels of parental stress. Parents want more information and greater involvement in infant pain prevention and management.



WHAT THIS STUDY ADDS: Increased parental involvement in infant pain management is feasible and enhances parental confidence with their parenting role after discharge. Parental stress during the NICU stay was not reduced, but satisfaction with pain information and preference for involvement were both increased.

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 parent 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

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KEY WORDS

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

ABBREVIATIONS

PSS—Parent Stressor Scale

SICS—Self-efficacy in Infant Care Scale

WBPBL-R—What Being a Parent of a New Baby Is Like—Revised CI—confidence interval

This trial has been registered at www.clinicaltrials.gov (identifier ISRCTN87094922).

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