

Family nurture intervention improves the quality of maternal caregiving in the neonatal intensive care unit: evidence from a randomized controlled trial.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:

This study assessed the impact of Family Nurture Intervention (FNI) on the quality of maternal caregiving behavior (MCB) while in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). FNI is a randomized controlled trial conducted in a high-acuity NICU to facilitate an emotional connection between mothers and their premature infants. FNI begins shortly after birth, continues until discharge, and involves mother/infant calming sessions that include scent cloth exchange, vocal soothing and emotion expression, eye contact, skin-to-skin and clothed holding, and family-based support sessions.

METHODS:

Maternal caregiving behavior was coded during a single holding and feeding session (~30 min) in the NICU before discharge at approximately 36 weeks gestational age (GA). Sixty-five mothers and their premature infants (34 male, 31 female; 26-34 wk GA) were included in these analyses (FNI, n = 35; standard care [SC], n = 30).

RESULTS:

Relative to mothers in the SC condition, those in the FNI group showed significantly higher quality MCB, which remained significant when controlling for birth order, twin status, maternal depression, and maternal anxiety.

CONCLUSION:

This is the first study to demonstrate that in-unit MCB can be enhanced by a hospital-based intervention. FNI provides a new rationale for integrating nurture-based interventions into standard NICU care.