

Improving Community Based Care for Late Preterm Infants

Background Information

Late preterm infants (LPIs) are infants born between 34^{0/7} weeks and 36^{6/7} weeks gestational age.^{1,2} LPIs make up about 75% of preterm births.³ Alberta's preterm birth rates are the highest in Canada with hospitals reporting a preterm birth rate of 8.8%.⁴ In 2012 in Calgary, of the 16,007 total live births, 1088 (6.8%) were LPIs.⁵ LPIs are a growing proportion of preterm infants and represent a distinct subpopulation of preterm infants due to their unique medical issues. These distinctive medical issues include hypoglycemia due to feeding difficulties, jaundice, respiratory distress syndrome, apnea, bradycardia, increased risk for sepsis, and temperature instability,^{1,6,7} and the fact that they are often treated as if they were term infants due to their older gestational age.

Significance of the Issue

LPIs comprise a growing vulnerable population that is at higher risk of health complications. LPIs are often re-admitted to hospitals due to the complexity of their health challenges and this has significant implications for the family and the health care system.^{1,6,7} As a result of their unique medical issues, LPIs require specialized care from various health care providers including public health nurses. One of the unique challenges for care of the LPI is that there are limited standards of care for Public Health Nurses (PHNs) to follow about caring for LPIs in the community.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the PHNs' experiences of caring for LPIs?
- 2) What challenges do PHNs experience in providing care to LPIs and their families?

Preliminary Analysis

This paper reports on the first part of a larger mixed- method study regarding the experiences of PHNs caring for LPIs and their families. This presentation provides a preliminary analysis of what PHNs experience when caring for LPIs in homes and clinics, where they provide nursing support.

Learning Objectives of the Presentation

Participants attending this presentation will be able to:

- 1) Describe public health nurses' experiences in caring for LPIs through an overview of the preliminary analysis of data
- 2) Recognize the bio-psycho and social challenges in providing nursing care to LPIs and their families
- 3) Examine the challenges of PHNs in providing appropriate short term support to families with LPIs

References

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