STRESS BEYOND THE NICU DISCHARGE: IMPLICATIONS TO OUTCOME

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DISCLOSURE

Learning Objectives:

- 1. Discuss the relationship of family experiences of stress and infant/toddler behaviors;
- 2. Present pilot study findings examining the relationship of family emotionality.

Conflict of interest statement:

I have no actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to this presentation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- NICU admissions are major stress events.
- According to the literature, NICU stress can:
 - Interfere with bonding & attachment
 - Play a role in postpartum depression
 - Invoke long-term anxiety and panic responses
 - Decrease maternal breast milk production
- Unresolved stress can:
 - Induce behavioral and biochemical changes for the parents, siblings, and perhaps the infant.

Walking on eggshells

This is the reality for many families...



And stress is manifested in babies as...



PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To examine the relationship between unresolved family stress and high-risk family experiences

METHODS

- Design: Cross-sectional correlation
- Setting: University Early Learning Center
- Tools: Family Emotion Expressiveness (FEE)
 - Completed by mothers at home
 - Measures emotional climates of family and information on corresponding infant behavior

Demographic instrument

SAMPLE

- 54 mothers of infants 6-months of age or older
 - 35.2% African American (19 or 54)
 - 70.4% with some college education (38 of 54)
 - 51.85% first child (28 or 54)
 - 77.7% employed 20 hours a week or more (42 of 54)
 - 92.5% married (50 of 54)

PROCEDURE

- Parents are consented to participate in research upon admission to the Learning Center
 - Mother's complete 14 inventories at home prior to admission
- 3-month study period for data collection and observation of morning drop off period
- Pilot study

ANALYSIS OF DATA

- Pearson correlation coefficients was used to determine relationship between variables.
 - Looking for correlations related to stress
 - NICU admissions and family stress (r = .88)
 - High risk primiparous births without NICU admissions and family stress (r = .72)

NOW LET'S GO BACK TO THE SAMPLE



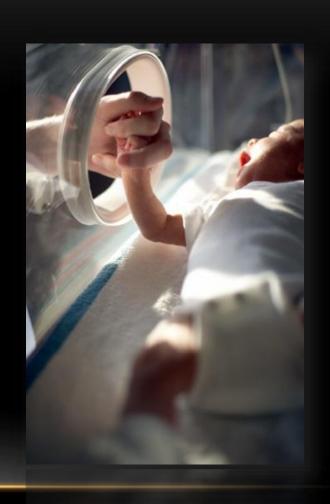
High Risk Primiparous Births

- Of the 54 reporting mothers, 44 were primiparous births (81.5%)
- Of these 44 mothers, 31 said they were high risk
 - Gestational diabetes, history, chronic illness, etc.

NOW LET'S GO BACK TO THE SAMPLE

NICU Admissions

- Of the 54 reporting mothers, 13 or 24.1% were admitted to the NICU
- Of the 13 admissions, only 3 were NICU stays of 7-days or longer



SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

- Findings illustrate a lasting unresolved family stress
 - It appears that the NICU admission is much more stressful than the high risk pregnancy
 - These NICU admissions were not for extremely premature infants
 - Stress seems to have become the "normal" for these families at more than 6-months out from the birth
 - Small pilot study, yet findings that make us rethink discharge teaching...

Recommendations

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- 1. Identify at risk families early
- 2. Interventions to decrease stress should be offered
- 3. Follow-up care of at-risk families



Thank you!

QUESTIONS?