

How Nurse Work Environments Relate to the Presence of Parents in Neonatal Intensive Care

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Objective

- Parental presence in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) is essential for families to be partners and active participants in the care of their infants and is particularly important to achieve a smooth transition from hospital to home.
- Nurses are the principal caregivers in the NICU setting.
- The nurse work environment may influence whether parents spend time with their hospitalized infants and may influence the extent to which parents find it easy and comfortable to spend time in the NICU.

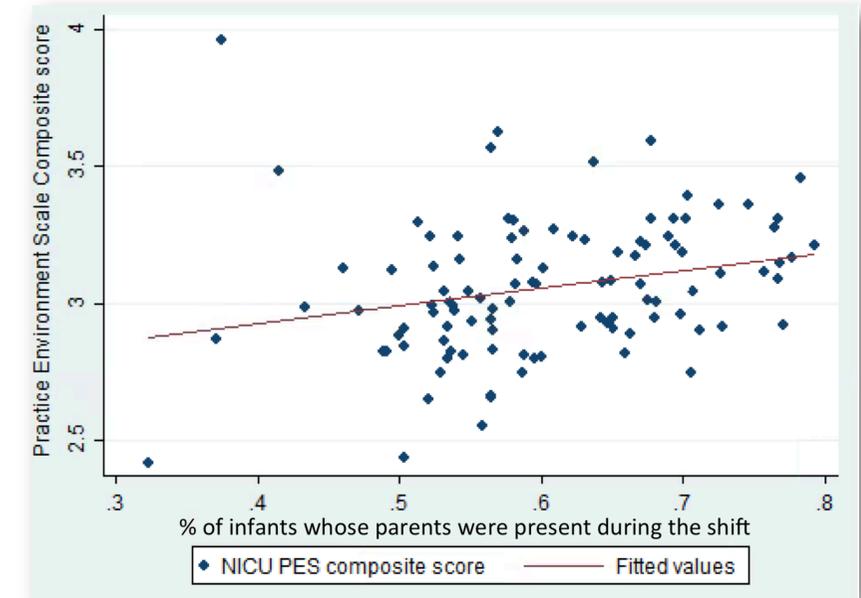
Methodology

- **Design:** Secondary analysis of cross-sectional nurse survey data.
- **Sample:** 104 U.S. NICUs where 6060 registered nurses (RNs) reported on the characteristics of their unit and about 15,233 infants they cared for on the last shift they worked.
- **Measures:**
 - National Quality Forum-endorsed Practice Environment Scale of the Nursing Work Index (PES-NWI)
 - Nurses indicated if parents of the infants they cared for were present for any part of the nurse's last shift.
- **Data Analysis:** Pearson correlation and bivariate regression were used to test for associations between the work environment and parental presence.



Results

- **On average, parents of 60% of infants were present during the shift. This ranged across the NICU sample from 32% to 79% (SD = 9.7%).**
- **The PES-NWI composite score as well as two subscales, Nurse Participation in Hospital Affairs and Manager Leadership and Support, were significant predictors of parental presence in bivariate regression models.**
- **A 1SD higher score in the composite or either subscale was associated with a 0.25 SD increase in parental presence in the NICU, equivalent to 2.5 percentage points.**



Conclusions

- Parental presence in the NICU is significantly associated with better nurse work environments, particularly where nurses are well supported through managerial leadership and where nurses participate in hospital governance and decision making.

Implications for Policy and Practice

- A supportive nurse work environment is a promising strategy to improve infant outcomes. Strong nursing leadership may foster family-centered culture and facilitate parental presence which may help families transition from the hospital to home.