

BENEFITS AND BARRIERS – OPINIONS ABOUT SKIN-TO-SKIN CARE AMONG NURSES AND PHYSICIANS IN NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE

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Skin-to-skin care (SSC) has several positive effects on both the infant and the parents. It has been implemented to various degrees in neonatal care all over the world. In a descriptive and comparative study (1) we have found that all neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) in the five Nordic countries offered opportunities for parents to provide SSC to their newborn infants. There was a wide variation in which infants could receive SSC, how much and in how the units facilitated SSC-use for the families.

Aim:

To compare opinions among nurses and physicians, about benefits of, and barriers to using SSC in neonatal intensive care.

Methods:

A survey was sent to 1 999 staff members in all 109 NICUs in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

Results:

The survey was answered by 1 267 nurses and nurse assistants (hereafter "nurses") and 151 physicians, which is a response rate of 72 %. When choosing the three most important motives for using SSC, from a list of sixteen possible options, nurses and physicians showed the same preference for psychosocial, physiological and "other" benefits, whereas a larger proportion of nurses pinpointed feeding benefits ($p=0.009$). Within the psychosocial domain a larger proportion of physicians than nurses chose the options "positive for parental-infant bonding" ($p=0.01$) and "better maternal/paternal satisfaction" ($p=0.001$).

When presented to a list of possible barriers to implementing SSC in their unit, there was no difference in how nurses and physicians rated barriers in the domains "Safety and medical concerns", "Concerns from family" or "Structural barriers". A larger proportion of the nurses thought "Concerns from staff at unit" was a somewhat or very influential barrier ($p<0.0001$).

Conclusion:

Nurses and physicians have the same motives for skin-to-skin care, whereas more nurses feel that staff-concerns can be a barrier to SSC. Education and guidelines about SSC can help in creating and maintaining common opinion and attitudes among the health care staff.

1. Olsson E, Axelin A, Andersen RD, Jonsdottir R, Maastrup R, Eriksson M. Skin-to-skin-care in neonatal intensive care units in the Nordic countries: a survey of attitudes and practices. Submitted.

