

## FROM A CLOSE TO AN OPEN 24 HOURS NEWBORN UNIT: A TRANSITION EXPERIENCE

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**INTRODUCTION :** Integrating the emotional and traditional care of the newborn in the San Ignacio teaching hospital followed with the implementation of the Kangaroo Mother Care Program (KMCP) provided an opportunity to transform the closed newborn unit in an open 24 hours a day unit for the family. This transition included the development of a program to educate and train health care personnel towards the management and control of their emotions when treating newborns.

**OBJECTIVE :** Consolidate actions to guarantee the comprehensive care of newborns, to include the parents in a more active role in the care of their infant during the process of hospitalization.

**METHODS:** The implementation of this technique was developed over a period of two years, while working on strengthening the emotional bonds. During this period of time, workshops and seminars about the management of emotions were held. Additionally studies were conducted including analysis of clinical cases to evaluate emotional impact. Also, the staff worked with parents in the management and care of their child inside the unit. During the same period of time, the adaptation of the KMCP was strengthened at the hospital, a vital condition for the success of the implementation of a 24 hours open neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

**RESULTS:** The results of this experience, in conjunction with the implementation of the KMC method in the hospital as routine care for the newborn, identified a decrease in the incidence of sepsis due to cross-infection. An accompaniment to parents by the interdisciplinary team decreased the resistance and fears of health care personnel against the permanent presence of families; it also helped parents to feel more confident towards newborn care. Other benefits included a marked reduction in hospital stay as well as a significant increase in exclusive breastfeeding.

**CONCLUSIONS :** This type of work permitted the implementation of the KMCP in the hospital without restrictions; parents continued their roles as primary caregivers in the unit. An interdisciplinary group was created; with the ability to understand the emotions parents have to deal with, as a result of infant care in NICU and routine invasive procedures. The hospital team was able to support parents undergoing a stressful experience according to the needs of the family, with critical eye and self-evaluation of their professional actions.

