

## Kangaroo Mother Care Programs in 19 California Hospitals

### Background:

The Perinatal Services Network of Loma Linda University Medical Center (PSN) is a unique model of collaboration between 19 hospitals serving 40,000 births per year in two Southern California counties. Since December 2000, we have trained over 3,000 registered nurses in early skin to skin care. Funded by a grant from First 5 San Bernardino and First 5 Riverside, this project has resulted in a major change in the early care of mothers and newborns. The focus of the program is the normal newborn immediately after birth. We use the acronym SOFT to include the four elements of early skin to skin care and to provide a simple method for nurses and families to describe the skin to skin behavior. SOFT stands for skin to skin, open eye to eye, fingertip touch and time together. The systematic inclusion of "SOFT" on the medical chart has created a dramatic shift of priorities from entirely physiologic indicators, to including an emotional index. This project began in 2000 with the participation of six hospitals. The number of participating hospitals has continued to grow over time. PSN offers professional education, assistance with policy review and quality management through data collection and dissemination. The 19 hospitals participate as sub-contracts and receive funding for implementing best practice guidelines.

### Methods:

Data is collected on nearly every birth and is used to track skin to skin care, breastfeeding and rooming-in. Data results are provided to the hospitals monthly along with suggestions on policy and practice change. The initial intervention included skin to skin care for every mother and infant during the first 2-hours following birth. The target at that time was fifteen minutes of skin to skin care. This target gradually was increased to thirty minutes and has been one hour for the past two years. Nurses and physicians are able to gradually incorporate new practices and prolong the skin to skin care. Currently, skin to skin care is becoming routine in many hospitals following vaginal births, as well as, c-section births.

### Results:

We have demonstrated a 192 % improvement in fifteen-minute skin to skin care and a 57% improvement in one-hour skin to skin care. Skin to skin care during the hospital stay is becoming a routine intervention for common early problems including breastfeeding dysfunction, the sleepy baby, the crying baby and we have seen a marked increase in skin to skin care with fathers.

### Conclusions:

Early skin to skin care for normal newborns is an excellent way to introduce and normalize kangaroo mother care. It is an intervention that can be applied to all babies, not just breastfeeding babies and provides immediate and consistently positive results to the nursing staff. The infant's temperature, physiologic stability and state regulation are all improved with mother kangaroo care. Nurses recognize the improvements demonstrated in the newborn and are eager to participate in mother kangaroo care.