

P 13. MASSAGE THERAPY DURING THE NICU PERIOD: A PILOT STUDY

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Background: Knowing that infants born prematurely are more vulnerable on different aspects such as heat loss and underweight problems, many studies have experimented the efficiency of massage therapy to improve regulation of body temperature (ref 1) and vagal activity (ref 12) and to help babies gaining weight (ref 5), being more relaxed, less active and less aroused (ref 4). Moreover, massage seems to decrease significantly the number of days baby spend at the hospital before being discharge(ref 1) **Objective:**The purpose of this pilot study is to observe the effect of a daily 15-minute massage on physiological state, on the weight gain and on the length of hospital stay. **Method: Participants:** Forty preterm infants were randomized to either receive massage therapy or not. Infants' weight at birth (less than 1501g.) and gestational age less than 35 were included. Those who suffered from mechanical ventilation, congenital malformation and/or were full term were excluded.

Procedure: The massage group receives a 15-minute massage once a day starting on their second day in NICU until they are discharged from hospital. It consists of three 5-minutes phases. The first and last phases consist in tactile stimulation while the middle phase consists in kinesthetic stimulation.

Measures: Before and after each massage: temperature, heart rate, oxygen saturation are noted. Temperature and weight are measured every day, and length and head circumference are measured every 3 days. **Results and discussion:** Means and significant physiological results are presented as well as a discussion on the feasibility of conducting such a randomized study in a developing country.