

Barriers to parental presence in the Winnipeg Women's Hospital NICU, a quality improvement pilot project

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INTRODUCTION

Sustained parental presence in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) is known to positively impact the neonatal and long-term neurodevelopmental outcomes of preterm infants. It also enhances parental mental health and the bonding between infants and their parents.

AIMS

While it is hoped that the new Winnipeg Women's hospital single family NICU rooms will facilitate parental presence, this pilot quality improvement project aimed to explore further barriers to parental presence at the Winnipeg Women's Hospital NICU.

METHODS

Between April and July 2021, we distributed a total of 75 surveys to parents of premature infants admitted to the Manitoba Women's Hospital NICU for ≥ 1 week. The survey asked parents on their opinions on possible barriers including parking, food availability, childcare, and overall accommodations for parents.

RESULTS

We received a total of 16/75 (21.3%) completed parental surveys; 15/16 (94 %) parents had at least some university or collage education and all parents were between the age of 21-40.

On average parents spent 63 hours/week in the NICU (min 6- max 165 hours/wk), with all reporting a desire to spend the same or more hours/wk.

The most prevalent barriers to spending more time in the NICU were parking (75%) and food (75%).

Price of parking and food, and availability of place to leave food were all noted as barriers.

Uncomfortable sitting/sleeping arrangements (46%), childcare for siblings (37%) were also identified as barriers for parents.



CONCLUSION

Parking and food were identified by parents of infants admitted at the Women's hospital NICU as the two most prominent barriers to parental presence.

Addressing such barriers (e.g by providing parents with more affordable parking and meal options) may potentially have a long-lasting impact on the outcomes of our NICU patients by facilitating grater parental presence.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This survey will be completed at the St Boniface NICU. We aim to address the identified barriers and assess for a possible increase in parental presence