

Giving Voice to Mothers---Expressing Breast Milk for their Preterm Infants in NICU

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BACKGROUND

Breast milk can make huge difference to preterm infant's survival and their long-term health. To improve the availability of mothers' own expressed milk for their preterm infants, efforts need to be made to support mothers to express breast milk. An understanding of the maternal experience of expressing breast milk for their preterm infant is imperative for the neonatal nurse, to facilitate positive maternal experience and to increase in the number of mothers breast feeding their preterm infants on discharge home. This research study is unique within the Irish context.

OBJECTIVE

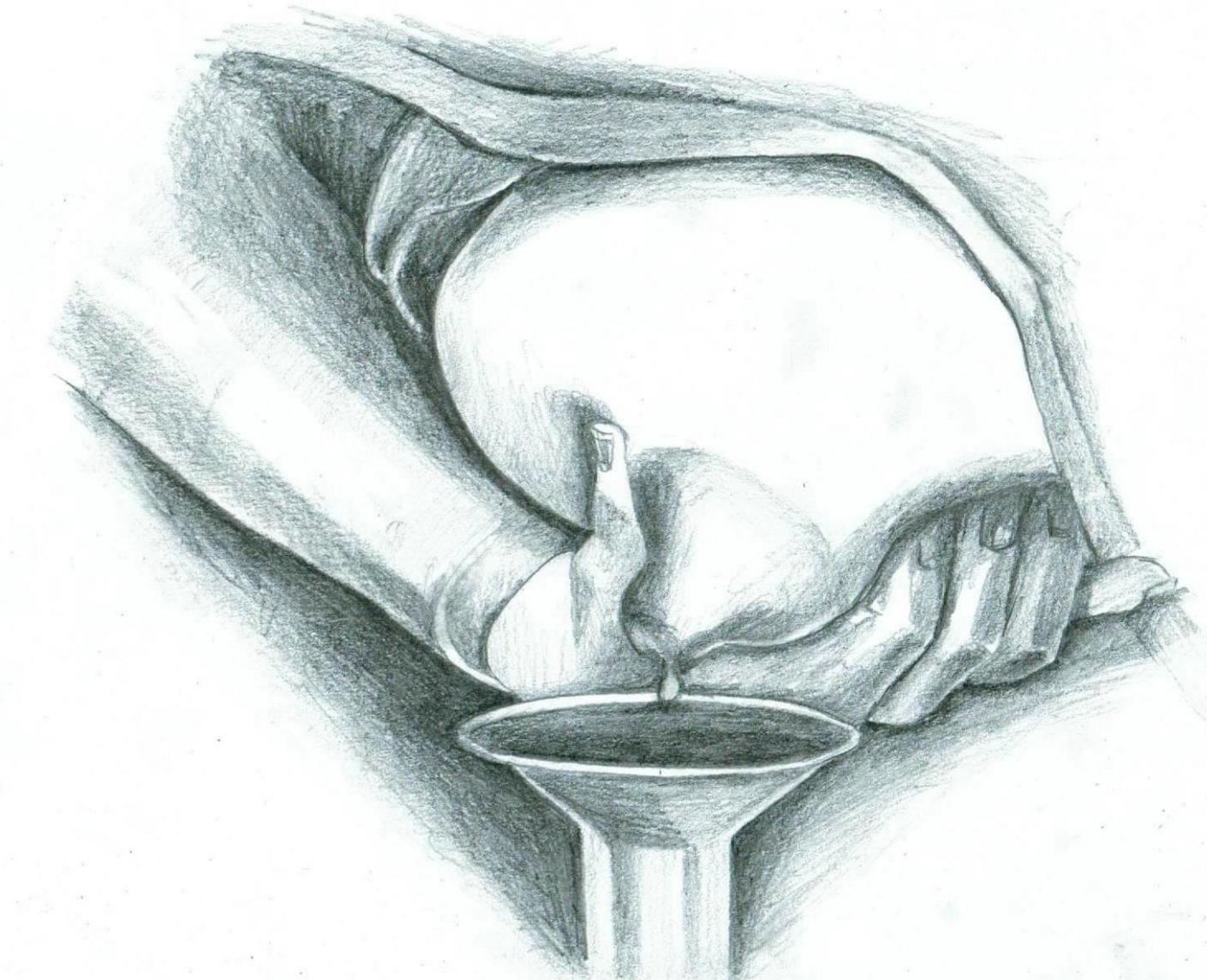
To gain an insight into mothers' challenges to support initiation and maintenance of breast milk production for their preterm infants

METHODOLOGY

- Ethical approval was sought and received
- Infants born less than 30 weeks gestation
- Infants weighing less than 1500 grams

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTIVE DESIGN

- Purposive, sample of eight mothers
- Interviews were transcribed verbatim
- Individual semi-structured interviews
- Analysed using Colaizzi's frame work



ANALYSIS

THREE MAJOR THEMES

- Getting started - physical and emotional challenges, initial support, early motivational influences and first drop of milk
- Continuation - hospital environment, time management, perceived maternal needs, maternal attitude
- Adaptation strategies - Controlling emotion, support classes, strategies to increase milk supply, developing social structure

FINDINGS

IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTHCARE PRACTICE

- Balancing frequent milk expression, being involved in baby's care, and looking after their own needs is possible only with the support of nurses and midwives
- Single message about importance of breast milk motivated mothers
- Reflected on delay in obtaining information and initial support, difficulty in comprehending pumping instructions, worries and happiness about the first drop of milk
- Perceived maternal needs include specific written information on expressing breast milk
- Reflected on their adaptation strategies to cope with frequent breast milk expression and their milk supply

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Facilities of NICU needs to be more supportive:
 - extra machines when needed different sizes of expressing bottles
 - steriliser to be available outside the expressing room
 - availability of a parent room
- Information and support for breast milk expression should be given as early as possible
- Written leaflet should be available and hand expression to be taught to all mothers
- Bed side pumps at each bed space with pumping log is important

- Include single messages (its like a MEDICINE, GOLDEN DROP) to motivate mothers
- Acknowledging the importance of first drop of milk is crucial
- Fathers to be included in infant feeding plans
- Individualised lactation support in NICU
- Always reinforce mother's positive attitude towards breast milk to overcome their negative attitude towards the act of expressing

LIMITATION

The eight mothers were recruited from one Maternity Hospital in the Republic of Ireland

CONCLUSION

Best practice guidelines for improving provision of mothers' own breast milk for their preterm infants in NICU will be developed incorporating recommendations.

REFERENCES

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