

INTERACTIONS IN THE SPECIAL CARE NURSERY: ARE THEY FAMILY CENTRED?

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports an ethnographic study conducted in two Australian Special Care Nurseries. Analysis revealed that while the presence of mothers in the nursery was high, registered nurses remain the primary carers of the infants. The interactions between registered nurses and mothers were found to be action or task orientated with communication largely being described as 'instrumental'. Our current research, funded by an NH&MRC grant, builds on this earlier work. Preliminary analysis of 110 hours of interview data with mothers and nurses and 350 cot side audio recordings confirms the importance of the nurse – parent relationship. It seems that this 'relationship' becomes vital to the mother's daily experience of caring for her infant as well as playing a pivotal role in how she perceived her NICU experience. Early analysis of the nurse's interviews suggests that while nurses speak of emotionally supporting the family and involving them in the infants care, their clinical practice does not reflect such a stance. This is in contrast to the current literature that identifies the need for a family centred approach to care that aims to support parents as they develop confidence, 'attach' to their baby and become skilled in providing care themselves.

For further information on our work please see the following publications;

Barclay LM and Lupton D. The experiences of new fatherhood: A sociocultural analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 1998;29(4):1-8

Barclay LM and Kent D. Recent immigration and the misery of motherhood. *Midwifery*, 1998;14(1):4-9

Barclay LM and Lloyd B. Misery of motherhood: Alternative approaches to maternal distress. *Midwifery*, 1996;2(3):136-139

Fenwick J, Barclay L and Schmied V. Activities and interactions in level II nurseries: A report of an ethnographic study. *The Journal of Perinatal & Neonatal Nursing*, 1999 June;13(1):53-65

Lupton D and Barclay L. *Constructing Fatherhood: Discourses and Experiences*. London: Sage Publications. 1997