

CYPSP Conference, 15 June 2022

PROMOTING IMH ON THE NEONATAL UNIT: TRAUMA-REDUCING INTERVENTIONS



Leanne Richmond , Clinical Sister & Dr Aiveen Higgins, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Neonatal Unit Antrim Area Hospital, NHSCT



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NNU Trauma and IMH

- Experiencing the Neonatal Unit (NNU) can be traumatic for infants, parents and families.
- The early postnatal period is a particularly sensitive developmental stage
- NNU infants are at increased risk of developing emotional, behavioural, academic and physical problems during childhood and adolescence.



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Potential Trauma Exposure

- Traumatic birth experience
- Early separation
- A stress-inducing, unnatural environment with bright lights and loud noises
- Painful medical procedures
- Increased parental stress and mental health challenges
- Lack of physical contact for long periods
- Physical barriers to bonding and physical touch (incubators, medical equipment, eye coverings etc.)

- Multiple caregivers

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Working together



Excellence



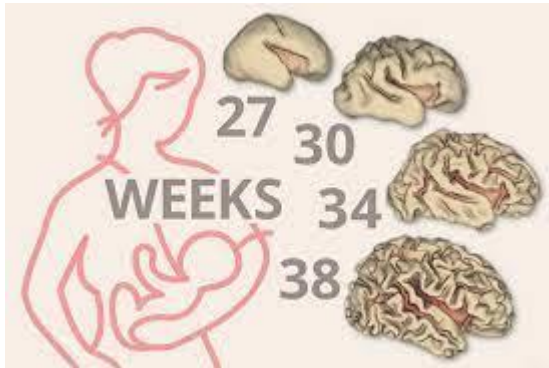
Openness & Honesty



Compassion

Where have we come from?





• WHERE WE ARE NOW?



Bliss Baby Charter Conference
and Neonatal Excellence Awards
Driving change in family-centred care
26 September 2019
Leicester Holiday Inn



Trauma-reducing Interventions to Support Parent-Infant Relationship



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Family-integrated Care

- Recognise the importance of encouraging close and loving relationships for the short term and long term benefits for baby and family.
- Reducing separation (encouraging early mother-infant contact) nurturing parental attachment.
- Parents are recognised as partners in care.
- The Nursing role has evolved to support, educate and guide parents to gain the confidence and competence to care for their babies.
- Help parents to understand and respond to their infants' cues.
- Encourage and Promote Breast-feeding.
- Be respectful of family choices and supportive of parental decisions



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Promoting Bonding & Attachment

- Promoting skin to skin (Kangaroo care)
- Breast-feeding & expressing support
- Bonding hearts & octopuses
- Empowered to participate in all aspects of care provision (feeding, bathing, recording temperature etc)
- Encourage reading & singing (baby library)



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Compassion

Baby's Environment

- Nesting
- Noise, light and smell reduction
- Pain management



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Supporting Our Parents

- Open Access to Unit
- Inclusive environment- Parents are encouraged to be present for ward round and participate in decision making
- Promoting good parental nutrition and well being
- Comfortable chairs
- Open Communication
- Reassurance
- Free Car Parking
- Receptive to all feedback - we continually strive to improve the service we provide



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Psychological Support on the Neonatal Unit

Are you a mum, dad, partner, grandparent or a
family member with a baby on our neonatal unit?



Welcome baby!

Firstly, congratulations on the arrival of your new baby/babies! Whilst for some families, their baby's time in NNU was planned and expected; for others it may have come as more of a shock. Either way, families with babies admitted to NNU have often gone through difficult experiences or have received concerning news about their baby.

How can speaking to a Psychologist help?

Emotional support is available from a wide range of people during your baby's time in the NNU.

Clinical Psychologists have specialist training in helping families who have a premature or sick baby.

We can think with you about what has happened and what is happening, and help you find a way to meet the challenges of being on the unit.

We can also help and support healthcare staff, giving advice and helping them think about the broader psychological factors that might be affecting families.

What can we do to help families?

Parents often describe their time on NNU as an 'emotional rollercoaster'. These feelings may be difficult to cope with, but are natural reactions to traumatic and stressful events.

Everyone reacts in their own way, but talking through your experiences can help you cope with this mixture of emotions. Spending time talking with a psychologist can help you:

- Express and understand these emotions, and explore ways to cope with them
- Discuss the effect of your recent experiences on relationships with your partner, children or other family members
- Find ways to problem-solve and make use of your strengths and skills
- Help you and your baby to continue to get to know each other and bond whilst on the NNU

The service can offer family members a safe confidential place to talk about what is happening and how it is affecting them.

We can also provide you with a booklet and information for siblings who may be at home.

Who we are

Dr Aileen Higgins is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist. Aileen currently provides support by telephone or virtual platforms. Dr Maeve Cushman is a Specialist Clinical Psychologist. Maeve is available on NNU on Monday afternoons.

Who do we see?

If you are a family member with a baby currently in Antrim NNU, you can access support from our psychology service. We can meet cot-side with you and your baby or in a private room on the ward. We also provide support by telephone and virtual platforms. The psychologist will agree with you the best place and time to meet. We also provide advice and support to NNU staff who care for your baby.

Confidentiality

We have strict rules about confidentiality and notes of what you discuss with the psychologist will be held separately from your baby's medical file. If we are concerned about the risk of harm to yourself or others, we will share this information with other professionals. If this is the case we will always try to inform those involved.

How to access our service

As a limited service, we do not see every family. You can ask NNU staff about meeting with the Clinical Psychologist, or talk to us directly on the ward. NNU staff may also suggest meeting with us and, with your consent, may make a referral on your behalf. For some families, we may introduce ourselves to see if you would like to avail of our service. If you would prefer that we did not introduce ourselves, please let NNU staff know. If you have any queries about our service, please speak to NNU staff and we can organise to meet with you. A psychology leaflet describing the service is available on the ward.

Unfortunately, as a limited service, we do not currently provide follow-up support to families who have been discharged from the NNU. However, we can help families prepare for discharge by linking in with supports in the community.

We can be contacted at:

Paediatric & Neonatal Clinical Psychology Services

Room 72, Level B, Antrim Area Hospital,
Bush Road, Antrim BT41 2RL
Telephone: 028 94424156



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Connecting to and bonding with your baby in the Neonatal Unit

YOU ARE SO IMPORTANT TO YOUR BABY
(whether you are on the unit or at home)

Your baby/babies will have been listening to you as they grew in the womb, and will recognise and be soothed by your voice(s). Familiarity is a great comfort to babies at home and especially in the neonatal unit.

- Talk to them, sing to them, read to them.
- Using a calm voice tell them about their family, their home, their journey here, your hopes for them and how proud you are of them.
- It doesn't matter what you speak about (how your day has been, the weather, how your football team are doing!!!), your baby will love to hear your familiar voice.


IF YOU CAN'T VISIT, YOU CAN RECORD YOUR VOICE

- Record yourself reading a bedtime story, singing or simply talking to your baby (and we promise, no judgement from neonatal staff about your singing voice!)
- This can be played to your baby as often as they like or need.
- Your baby will recognise and feel comforted to hear your familiar voice.
- Repeatedly hearing your voice will help baby feel safe and will nurture your relationship.
- Siblings can record themselves or help choose favourite stories to share with baby.
- You can check with staff about when is a good time to play these messages.


CUDDLE, IF YOU CAN

- Cuddling helps nurture your relationship with your baby.
- The neonatal team will be able to help you to learn when and how to cuddle your baby.
- We know that it is really difficult when you are unable to cuddle your baby. If you cannot cuddle, but are on the unit – use your words to connect and soothe them. You can explain to your baby what is happening - "I am here. I know this is hard. The doctors are going to give you some medicine, then you can snuggle in peace"
- If you can't be with your baby, cuddle your partner before they leave for the hospital to pass onto your baby and don't forget to get a cuddle back when your partner comes home. We know this is not the same, but cuddles passed on can go a long way until you have your little baby in your own arms.
- Siblings and grandparents might also like to pass on cuddles and kisses.

Kangaroo Care



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 **teamNORTH**


Compiled by: the Paediatric & Neonatal Clinical Psychology Service
Includes content adapted from A De Petrillo, G Childs & R Childers, Evelina Hospital, London)
With input from Eimear Cleary (Clinical Psychologist in Training, QUB)

*Techniques to Soothe & Calm
When you feel overwhelmed...*

Soothing Breathing

One of the best things about our breath is that we always have it with us. This makes it accessible to us at any time; even when feeling anxious, a bit out of our depth, or overwhelmed. The following simple exercise therefore is one that we can use whenever we need it, and without it being obvious to other people. And it only takes a minute.

1. Sit in a comfortable position, with both feet flat on the floor. Try to sit upright; roll your shoulders back, lift and open your chest. Imagine a thread connected to the top of your head, gently pulling and straightening your posture. Either close your eyes, or gently rest your gaze downwards.
2. Bring your focus gently to your breath and notice the different sensations as it makes its way through your body.
3. Inhale through your nose for a count of 1-2-3-4, then softly exhale through your mouth. With each breath, try to lengthen this out-breath. Imagine that you are softly blowing on a feather in the air.
4. Repeat this cycle for a few minutes. You may notice thoughts coming and going, pulling your mind away from your breath. This is completely natural. Just notice these thoughts and try to let them pass by, gently returning your focus to your breath. It may help to imagine your thoughts as clouds in the sky, just passing.



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Referring to Psychology

- No forms; no waiting lists
- Service introduction for vulnerable families
- One-to-one support
 - Attachment–informed interventions
 - Trauma-informed therapy



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Looking After Staff: Trauma by Proxy

- Weekly mindfulness
- Psycho-education on self-care
- One-to-one consultation



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THANK YOU



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