

# Assigned Primary Nurses: Effects on Maternal Depression in the NICU

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## PICOT QUESTION

In mothers of NICU babies, what is the effect of an assigned primary nurse on maternal depression compared with no assigned primary nurse from the time of NICU admission through NICU discharge.

- P** Mothers of NICU babies
- I** Assigned primary nurse
- C** No assigned primary nurse
- O** Decreased maternal depression
- T** During NICU hospitalization



## LITERATURE SEARCH CRITERIA

### Databases:

- CINAHL, Google Scholar

### Key Search Terms:

- NICU primary nurse, NICU nurse, NICU or neonatal intensive care unit, Maternal depression NICU, Primary nurse assignment

### List of Criteria:

- Published within the last 5 years
- Published in English
- Peer reviewed article or journal

## BACKGROUND

Maternal depression has been recognized as a prevalent issue in NICU mothers. Many parents are dissatisfied with constant staffing changes and with the lack of communication and collaboration from NICU nurses (Brødsgaard et al., 2019). Primary nursing supports families by providing continuity of care and facilitates the development of a stronger bond between the family and primary nurse, enhancing communication and increasing the family's sense of ease and reassurance (Umberger et al., 2018). Therefore, implementing a primary nurse within the NICU provides emotional support and comfort, lead to lower risk for maternal depression.

## SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

- NICU mothers experience higher rates of depression and often prioritize the well-being of their hospitalized infants over their own (Alexopoulou et al., 2018).
- Having a consistent healthcare team can improve the mental health of mothers by decreasing NICU related stress (Gonya et al., 2019).
- Maternal stress can be decreased, and trust can be built most effectively, with mothers through clear communication and explanation of NICU equipment and procedures (Hassankhani et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2018).
- Maternal stress levels decrease when NICU staff acknowledge the mothers' needs through communication (Williams et al., 2018).
- A mother's trust in the NICU nurses has a direct impact on their relationship and the mother's confidence, satisfaction, and trust, which in turn can affect the mother's risk for depression (Brødsgaard et al., 2019; Hassankhani et al., 2020).
- Primary nursing leads to improved treatment/management results (blood creatinine, fasting glucose, urea nitrogen, proteinuria, lower CRP, lower TNF-alpha) as well as improved patient psychiatric and emotional wellbeing (Guo et al., 2022).

## DECISION TO CHANGE PRACTICE

- Changing current practice is driven by higher maternal depression risk during NICU hospitalization.
- Assigned primary nurses improve patient outcomes, communication, trust, and satisfaction for mothers.
- Primary nurses' consistent care lowers maternal depression risk and enhances nurse-mother relationship.
- Williams et al. (2018) and Hassankhani et al. (2020) suggest that assigning a primary nurse for thorough communication may reduce maternal depression.

## EVALUATION

- By discharge from NICU hospitalization, 75% of mothers in the NICU will have a decrease in risk for maternal depression with the implementation of assigned primary nurses, shown by a score of 15 or less on the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression scale.
- Evaluate maternal depression outcomes with a pretest and posttest using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale at admission and discharge of NICU hospitalization.

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