Are You Ready For This? Assessing Parent Readiness Prior to Discharge from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

KIRTLEY CEBALLOS, MSN, RNC-NIC, PCNS-BC; KERRI STATON, BSN, RN; KATHY CONNER, BSN, RN

Background

- Taking a baby home from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) is a milestone that creates angst for the caregiver.
- Studies demonstrate that parents struggle to recall discharge instructions and do not feel prepared to care for their infant without the support of NICU staff.
- Ensuring parents are adequately prepared is critically important for achieving positive health outcomes.
- The purpose of this project was to implement an assessment tool to evaluate and enhance parents’ readiness for discharge from the NICU.

Methods

- An assessment tool that elicits demonstration and explanation of central elements of newborn care from care givers was developed and implemented.
- Quantitative scoring allows discharge RNs to objectively evaluate parent readiness to care for their high risk infant at home.
- A standardized scoring key promotes reliable assessment with best practices for customized education and anticipatory guidance for what to expect after going home.

Assessment Tool

NICU Parent Readiness Assessment

Scoring Key Sample

| Scenario | Scaling | Sample
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;I can confidently and accurately explain the importance of maintaining the baby's body temperature.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scenario 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;I can explain the importance of maintaining the baby's body temperature.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scenario 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;I can explain the importance of maintaining the baby's body temperature.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Scoring

- 3: The parent is able to clearly and accurately explain the importance of maintaining the baby’s body temperature.
- 2: The parent is able to explain the importance of maintaining the baby’s body temperature.
- 1: The parent is able to explain the importance of maintaining the baby’s body temperature.

Outcomes

- Median score of assessed parents was 90%, indicating most parents are prepared for discharge by time of assessment.
- Barriers to assessment include time to perform the assessment, heavy patient assignments, availability of discharge navigator RNs, and inability to predict date of discharge.
- Assessment was most successful when done by designated discharge RNs, rather than bedside RN.

Implications For Practice

- Evaluating parent readiness to care for a high risk infant at home is an essential part of comprehensive discharge preparation in the NICU.
- Quantitative evaluation of parent readiness prior to infant discharge from the NICU enhances comprehensive discharge preparation and promotes positive health outcomes.
- Research is continuing to evaluate the impact of this preparedness assessment on discharge related safety events and unscheduled health care use.

Corresponding Author Contact: Kirtley.Ceballos@UCHealth.org