

Teamworking reaps rewards in Belfast

The regional NICU at Belfast's Royal Maternity Hospital was created in 2000 by bringing together the services of the Jubilee Maternity Hospital and the Royal Maternity Hospital to provide a local and regional service to Northern Ireland.

Admissions of around 550 patients a year include very premature babies and babies with cardiac, metabolic or surgical problems. There is capacity for nine intensive care, seven high dependency and 15 special care infants. The unit is a recognised Neonatal Research Centre conducting and participating in local and multi-centred European trials.

Staff on the unit are very motivated and have set up many groups to enhance practice, including infection prevention, policies and procedures, governance issues and baby massage. The aim is to contribute to the safe running of the unit, provide the most up-to-date research-based care and to work in partnership with the parents.

Infection control

The infection control group was set up to monitor and improve hygiene standards within the unit. Main aims were to heighten awareness of hand washing and dress code and to empower staff to challenge staff or visitors who were not following hand or uniform policy.



Joseph's Mum uses the massage skills she has been taught to share the benefits of positive touch with him.

Weekly audits and results displayed monthly on the notice board have created a healthy competition between nursing and medical staff. Overall staff have become more protective of the babies in their care, more assertive and better able to challenge those who do not meet hygiene standards.

The same standard applies to uniform policy; considerable improvements have been made and a high standard maintained in this complex unit.

Starting with the basics and getting those right will hopefully make it easier when the team moves on to more complicated audits.

Policies and procedures

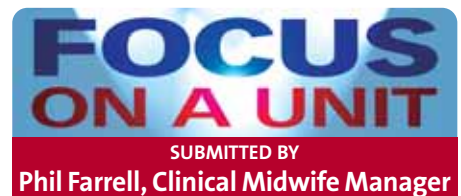
The advent of clinical governance in 1998 provided the procedure group with an opportunity to influence improvements in practice leading to higher standards.

Currently, the group consists of a midwife and two staff nurses who aim to meet weekly. The group works to develop and update nursing procedures which guide nurses/midwives in providing a high standard of care.

Procedures reflect the most up-to-date research, advances in neonatal care, government initiatives and legislative change, for example the Safer Practice Notice, "Right patient, Right Blood", issued by the The National Patient Safety Agency.

Further procedures have been developed following risk management meetings highlighting the need to review practice in certain areas, for example the management of extravasation.

Some procedures, such as the bereavement procedure, have information packs which give clear instructions for staff, who say these packs are invaluable and provide a significant contribution to improving the quality of care.



Infection control group members Sharon, Sandra and Kathryn.



Of the unit's 31 cots, nine are intensive care.

Infant massage

Unit infant massage instructors have undertaken training to teach all aspects of infant massage and are certified instructors belonging to the International Association of Infant Massage. A leaflet produced on the unit clearly describes the benefits of positive touch for parents and babies, explaining that massage can be a pleasurable way to develop trust and intimacy with a baby and strengthen the bond between mother, father and child.

Parents can have four sessions with one of the four instructors who share a rota to ensure continuity of teaching.

Feedback from parents has been very positive, which encourages the team to continue with the hard but beneficial work.

The unit also benefits from a practice educator and a discharge coordinator/community neonatal nurse. Both posts are an asset to the unit, being involved in staff induction, student training and complex discharges, as well as families who need support to safely and comfortably make the transition into the community.

Is your unit special?

Why not contribute to our focus on a unit feature?
Contact kate@infantgrapevine.co.uk