



Dr Renée Flacking (left) and Dr Fiona Dykes.

Research shows that better design leads to better bonding

The design of spaces within NICUs can impact on how newborn babies feed and how they bond with their parents, according to research published in *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*.

Drs Renée Flacking and Fiona Dykes of the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) analysed the experiences of mothers, fathers and staff within four typical NICUs in the north west of England and Sweden. Their findings show that when the spaces available to parents in NICUs are designed so that

the parents' emotional and physical needs are met, they facilitate better feeding experiences and time spent together.

There has been a growing interest in the ways in which the design of spaces within hospitals influences health and relationships and even without redesign there are measures that may be taken to make a positive difference for parents and their preterm babies.

A full copy of the report can be seen at: www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-2393-13-179.pdf

Maternal age and birth outcomes

Figures from the Office for National Statistics confirm that women aged 40 years or over are more likely to give birth prematurely while younger mothers are more likely to have smaller babies.

In 2011, approximately 10% of babies born to mothers aged 40 years or over in England and Wales were born before 37 weeks gestation, while mothers aged 25 to 29 years were least likely to give birth prematurely (6.7%). This pattern has been a consistent trend over time and part of the reason for this may be because older women are more likely to have multiple births – women with a twin pregnancy tend to give birth earlier than women with a singleton pregnancy, at around 36 to 37 weeks gestation.

At the other end of the spectrum, younger mothers are more likely to give birth to babies who are small for their gestational age (SGA) and in 2011, 11% of babies born to mothers under 20 were SGA. Socio-demographic factors could play a significant role here as a number of studies have found that young mothers are more likely to drink alcohol and/or smoke.

To see the report visit: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/child-health/gestation-specific-infant-mortality-in-england-and-wales/2011/sty-gsim.html

A user-friendly gel for low blood sugar

Applying dextrose gel to the inside of the cheek is an effective treatment for low blood sugar in newborn infants, according to research published in *The Lancet*¹.

Neonatal hypoglycaemia, a common problem in neonates, is a preventable cause of brain damage. Current treatment for late preterm and term babies involves extra feeding, repeat blood tests and the possibility of treatment with intravenous glucose.

Researchers in the 'Sugar Babies Study' set out to assess whether dextrose gel was more effective than feeding alone for reversal of neonatal hypoglycaemia in high-risk infants. They showed that the inexpensive, safe and simple-to-use gel almost halved the frequency of treatment failure. Furthermore, infants given dextrose gel were less likely to receive additional formula feeds or be admitted to the NICU with hypoglycaemia.

More research is required to determine the dose and frequency of administration, but the study indicates that the use of dextrose gel could help to minimise the need for intravenous glucose.

Reference

1. Harris D.L., Weston P.J., Signal M. et al. Dextrose gel for neonatal hypoglycaemia (the Sugar Babies Study): a randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial. *Lancet* 2013 doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(13)61645-1.



Christine Sammy of Kitui, Kenya, (left) and Anila Ali Bardai of Karachi, Pakistan, (centre) were selected as the two winners of the International Neonatal Nursing Excellence Award. Netsayi Gowero of Blantyre, Malawi, was runner-up.

International nursing excellence recognised

The Council of International Neonatal Nurses (COINN) and Save the Children's Saving Newborn Lives programme recognise the commitment of nurses working in newborn care in low-resource settings by presentation of the International Neonatal Nursing Excellence Award.

This year's winners were honoured during the opening ceremony of the eighth international neonatal nursing conference (COINN 2013) in Belfast in September. Approximately 400 neonatal nursing professionals from around the world attended the four-day event, which was opened by Edwin Poots, Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland.