

# Celebrating excellence in neonatal care and prioritising family involvement

Bliss Baby Charter Conference, Leicester, 26 September 2019

Research shows that parents who get involved in their baby's care (family-centred care) on the neonatal unit can have positive effects on the entire family. However, as a nurse, doctor or parent on the unit, how can you make sure family involvement is prioritised? How can change be supported on the unit when staffing levels are low and doing that which is familiar makes life easier?

Health professionals from across the UK came together at the Bliss Baby Charter Conference in Leicester to discuss these questions and the impact of supporting change in units to achieve the best outcomes for babies.

Andy Stevens, an experienced project and change manager, kick-started the day by speaking about the impact of change in any situation. Andy noted that change is the only constant in life and something that affects all of us. He went through the change curve and gave tips, which included communicating with others, obtaining senior buy-in, learning from others, and supporting the change ourselves.

Parent speaker Mel Ibrahim shared with the audience her harrowing journey on the neonatal unit, which started with her giving birth in the hospital bathroom at 24 weeks' gestation. Mel openly talked about how the experience impacted on her mental health, in part due to the lack of professional psychological support available to her at the time. Since leaving neonatal care, Mel has campaigned extensively and secured a dedicated psychologist for the neonatal unit at Nottingham's Queen's Medical Centre. Mary Palframan, Family Support Sister at the neonatal unit, spoke about the positive effects this new support is having on parents and families. Over the past few months she has found that recovery of mothers and bonding with their babies has improved now that there is a clinical psychologist in place.

Delegates also heard from Sarah Roberts, Acting Senior Sister and Developmental Care Lead at Queen's Hospital Burton on



The Royal Devon and Exeter team receiving the WaterWipes Team of the Year Award.

Trent, who discussed cue-based feeding and the positive response received from parents.

Consultant Neonatologist Neil Patel and Senior Charge Nurse Ros Montgomerie of the Royal Hospital for Children, Glasgow, spoke about collaborating with parents who have been affected by being on a neonatal unit. Their ethos has been to support parents in as many ways as possible. This has included:

- the use of whiteboards by the cot side
- using vCreate (a video messaging service that helps to minimise separation anxiety in parents)
- using fingerprint scanners for access to the unit
- setting up the 'helping us grow' (HUG) group – a partnership of staff and parents working together to develop family-integrated care at Glasgow.

Michele Upton, Head of Maternity and Neonatal Transformation Programmes, NHS Improvement, discussed the Atain project (avoiding term admissions in neonatal units) highlighting the impor-

tance of working with people who are enthusiastic individuals and linking in with national guidelines. She also emphasised the importance of working with frontline teams such as local maternity services and operational delivery networks.

Award-winning author Francesca Segal spoke to delegates about her neonatal experience. Francesca read an excerpt from her book *Mother Ship* and spoke at length about her experience on the neonatal units where her twins received care. Her touching and compelling story was an excellent way to close the conference. Everyone who attended the conference received a free copy of *Mother Ship* thanks to Francesca and her publisher Penguin.

## Bliss' Neonatal Excellence Awards

Following the conference, we held our second Neonatal Excellence Awards ceremony, celebrating outstanding individuals, teams and projects that make a difference to babies born premature or sick by delivering high quality family-centred

care as part of the Bliss Baby Charter.

Bliss received over 350 nominations for the awards. Parents, families and healthcare professionals sent in submissions from across the UK wanting to show their appreciation for the support, dedication and excellence they have experienced in neonatal care. Their stories were heart-warming, moving and inspirational.

#### The winners included:

##### WaterWipes Team of the Year Award –

Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital received the award for promoting and encouraging family-centred care. The team in Exeter has been working with parents, allied health professionals and nursing and medical teams to enable it to provide a service that suits the needs of families on the unit. Families are welcome to stay next to their baby at all times of the day, aided by the availability of camp beds for every cot space as well as single bedrooms and options for rooming in with the intention of keeping families together.

**Parents' Choice Award** – Joyce Presland from the Lister Hospital was given this accolade for going above and beyond in supporting parents and families through family-centred care. Joyce was nominated by a mother whose baby was born eight weeks premature. Joyce has been described as: "A model professional. Caring and kind with a sense of humour and always has her patients' best interests at heart."

**Project of the Year Award** – Glangwili General Hospital received this award for offering a multidisciplinary appointment with a neonatal dietitian, occupational therapist, physiotherapist and speech and language therapist supported by a neonatal outreach nurse. This enables families based in rural areas to attend hospital appointments more readily. The team also travels together to see the family in the home if



Joyce Presland of Lister Hospital receiving the Parents' Choice Award.



The team from Glangwili General Hospital receiving the Project of the Year Award.

they are unable to attend appointments at the hospital.

##### Pregnacare Lifetime Achievement

**Award** – Professor Neil Marlow received this award for his career-long focus to understand the main challenges and

neuropsychological outcomes of extremely preterm infants.

**Dumisani Nyathi**

Training and Events Programme Lead, Bliss

## 7th Neonatal Nutrition Network Study Day

June 18th, 2020



The UCH Education Centre, 1st Floor West, 250 Euston Road, London, NW1 2PG

**N3- The Neonatal Nutrition Network**

University College London Hospitals



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