

Abstract Title:

Interdisciplinary Family Conferences to Improve Patient Experience in the NICU

Presenter:

Arwin Valencia, M.D.
MCH/Long Beach Memorial Medical Center
2801 Atlantic Ave. Long Beach CA 90806
Phone: 562-933-8100
Email: avalencia@memorialcare.org

Author:

Ching Tay RNC
MCH/Long Beach Memorial Medical Center
2801 Atlantic Ave. Long Beach CA 90806
Phone: 562-933-8100
Email: ctay@memorialcare.org

Co Author/Co-Investigator Names/Professional Title: Jennifer Trujillo, LCSW¹; Yesenia Fernandez, MSW¹; Lyla Ghafoori, MSW¹; Kristina Lok, MSW¹; Ching Tay, MS, CNS, RNC-NIC², Arwin Valencia, M.D.²

¹Department of Social Services, Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, Long Beach California.²
Department of Neonatology, Miller's Children & Women's Hospital, Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, Long Beach, CA.

Background: Parents and family members act as surrogates for sick neonates for medical decision-making. Thus, clear communication between parents and clinicians is vital in the NICU. Studies suggest that these interactions have profound effects on the family's long-term mental health. One way to improve the family's experience and to encourage their involvement, is by establishing a formal and focused family conference within 7 to 14 days.

Goals: To achieve 95% compliance by the end of December 2015 in facilitating conferences within 7 to 14 days after admission for the families of eligible patients.

Method: NICU social workers plan and coordinate Interdisciplinary Family Conferences (IFC) for the families of all eligible babies within 7 to 14 days of admission into the NICU. Eligible babies included those who were less than 32 weeks of gestation and those with congenital birth anomalies. Data from September 2014 through December 2015 were collected and analyzed to determine the challenges in accomplishing this goal. Patient satisfaction (AVATAR) score, specifically on physician care, was tracked as an outcome measure. Process measures included percentage of family conferences that occurred within 14 days of admission.

Results: The goal of 95% compliance was achieved during the course of this project. The study showed that each family had unique challenges. Some families declined, as they felt that they were not mentally prepared to hear a delineated update of their infant within 14 days, but preferred a later date. Parents of those premature infants between 30 - 32 weeks of gestation appeared to be well informed on the status and prognosis of their child, even before the IFC. These families felt that they had been updated enough at bedside or by physician phone calls and, thus, the majority declined a formal IFC. AVATAR score for patient satisfaction during the study phase trended upward.

Conclusion: The study revealed that IFCs are an integral part of a family-centered care approach in the NICU. The IFCs foster partnering with families to ensure their involvement in all aspects of patient care. They also provide opportunities for families to meet the care team away from the bedside, away from the many distractions. This allows for improved communication.