

Do babies and parents have better outcomes if they are encouraged and supported to be more involved in their preterm baby's care?

To answer this question: We compared outcomes for babies and parents who received the standard of care, known as Family Centered Care (FCC), in 3 different neonatal intensive care units (NICUs), with outcomes for babies and parents who received a new model of care, called mobile enhanced Family Integrated Care (mFICare).

What we did: Parents of babies who were born at least seven weeks early (at 33 weeks or less) received the following services:

Standard FCC

- General encouragement to participate in their baby's caregiving in the NICU
- Teaching by nurses at their baby's bedside
- Use of an app for parents with an online journal and the research surveys

mFICare

- All standard FCC plus:
- Parent classes: to connect with other parents, ask questions about common health problems with prematurity NICU care, and learn from NICU experts
- Parent mentors: to connect with a parent who also had a preterm baby for parent-to-parent support
- More support for being involved: in their baby's care and in their baby's care planning during daily medical rounds
- More app features: to track their baby's progress, learn through helpful videos and content

Who took part

- There were 141 babies in the FCC group and 112 babies in the mFICare group
- There were 89 mothers in each group who completed surveys about 4 months after their babies went home about how they were feeling
- Babies and mothers were diverse – 77% Black, Indigenous or People of Color
- The FCC and mFICare groups were similar at the beginning of the study in all ways we could measure

What we learned

Babies in the mFICare group

- Had three times fewer infections during their stay in the NICU than babies in the FCC groups
- Had better weight gain if their parents participated in medical rounds and group classes than if their parents did not participate

Mothers in the mFICare group who had stressful NICU experiences

- Had fewer symptoms of post-traumatic stress or depression about 4 months after leaving the NICU than mothers who were in the FCC group

Parents and NICU staff

- Liked mFICare – and had ideas for improving it

What do we do now?

- Spread the word – Talk about FICare with other parents and healthcare professionals
- More research – can mFICare help in other NICUs?

Questions or comments?
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To read more about the research:

- Franck et al. BMC Pediatrics (2022) 22:674.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-022-03732-1>
- Franck et al. BMC Pediatrics (2023) Aug 10;23(1):396.
<https://bmcpediatr.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12887-023-04211-x>
- Franck et al., Adv Neonatal Care (2023)
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37948639/>
- Franck et al., Patient Ed Counsel Innov (2024)
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11087992/>