What is Neuroprotective Family-Centered Developmental Care?

About this Document
This document is a resource to the course: Introduction to Neuroprotective Family-Centered Developmental Care, Lesson: What is Neuroprotective Family-Centered Developmental Care?

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What is Neuroprotective Family-Centered Developmental Care?

Neuroprotective family-centered developmental care is an evidence-based best practice model aiming to minimize the negative effects of hospital care provided in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and illness to maximize infant and family outcomes.

Neonates are active participants in their environment and communicate their needs through a variety of non-verbal cues. In the (NICU) environment they are exposed to numerous stressors, including noxious sounds, bright lights, painful stimuli, repeated non-nurturing handling, medical and nursing procedures, altered sleep cycles, and disrupted parenting (Altimier & White, 2014).

Neuroprotective developmental care includes a broad category of strategies that are designed to minimize the stress of the NICU environment on preterm infants. Examples of neuroprotective care interventions include controlling external stimuli (tactile, vestibular, chemosensory, auditory, and visual), providing clustering of nursery care activities, and positioning or swaddling of the preterm infant to provide containment similar to the intrauterine experience (Altimier & Phillips, 2013; Symington & Pinelli, 2009).

Individualized developmental care is a framework that encompasses not only the physical environment of the NICU, but also the human (caregiver) environment in the way that care is provided to the preterm infant (Als, 1998). Developmentally supportive family-centered care is a framework for care delivery that recognizes and responds to the unique attributes, vulnerabilities and values of the hospitalized infant and family (Griffin, 2006).

As we strive to continue to improve our morbidity and mortality rates, we are challenged to enhance the neuroprotective strategies for these infants, demonstrating the need for a developmentally appropriate supportive environment that focuses on the interpersonal experiences of the preterm infant in the NICU.

Family-Centered Developmentally Supportive Care utilizes neuroprotective strategies to support neuroplasticity of the preterm infant’s rapidly developing brain (Altimier & Phillips, 2013).
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