

Infant Safe Sleep: A Curriculum for Nurses on Labor and Delivery Units

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ABSTRACT

Purpose. Approximately 3500 infants die annually in the United States from sleep related deaths. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a safe sleep environment that can reduce the risk of all sleep-related infant deaths. However, these recommendations are inconsistently adopted in communities and often rejected by parents. Studies have indicated that parents listen to nurses and model their actions regarding the sleep position of their new infant. The nurse's behavior is essential in influencing parents to place their babies in a safe sleep environment, and staff education programs significantly increase the knowledge acquisition, attitudes, and practice intentions of these health care professionals.

Methods. This doctoral project is a component of an infant safe sleep campaign, initiated by the Vermont Department of Health (VDH). An educational module was created for nursing staff on labor and delivery units in a number of Vermont hospitals to provide them with evidence-based recommendations for infant safe-sleep practices and to highlight their vital role in providing a consistent message to parents. The module includes the current safe sleep guidelines of The American Academy of Pediatrics; risk factors for sudden unexplained infant death; common misconceptions in regard to safe sleep practices; cultural aspects of infant safe sleep; nurses as role models and educators; and the evidence behind commonly advertised products such as baby slings, baby boxes, and owlet monitors. Through the use of pre- and post-educational module viewing surveys, this project will determine how an educational module for nursing staff on labor and delivery units will impact their knowledge of infant safe sleep and the messages they provide to parents of newborns.

Results. The final product has not been implemented at this time due to delays in key informant interviews by John Snow Inc. (JSI). The data obtained from these interviews will be integrated into the final draft of the educational module by the VDH. However, nurse managers from North Country Hospital, Rutland Regional Medical Center, Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital, Central Vermont Medical Center, Copley Hospital, Gifford Medical Center, Northwestern Medical Center, and Porter Medical Center have viewed the most complete version of the module and have provided constructive feedback.

Conclusion. Upon initial review, the nurse managers found the educational module to be informative and believe it will help nurses to provide a consistent and evidence-based message about infant safe sleep. Once the data collected by JSI is added to the module, it will be incorporated into the healthcare learning management software and implemented as mandatory education for nurses on labor and delivery units. A number of slides from the module will also be used to create a generic presentation for all health care professionals in Vermont.

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INTRODUCTION

- Approximately 3500 infants die annually in the United States from sleep-related deaths
- There is an inconsistent message being communicated by health care professionals to parents regarding infant safe sleep recommendations
- Parents are getting mixed messages about what safe sleep entails
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a safe sleep environment that can reduce the risk of all sleep-related infant deaths
- Education from health care professionals can influence a parent's choice of sleeping positions for their infants
- Educational interventions aimed at increasing staff knowledge and compliance with infant safe sleep recommendations has been shown to be effective at changing hospital staff behavior
- Studies suggest that parents are likely to imitate infant sleep practices modeled by health care providers in a hospital setting

METHODS AND MATERIALS

- An educational module was created for nursing staff on labor and delivery units in a number of Vermont hospitals to provide them with evidence-based recommendations for infant safe-sleep practices and to highlight their vital role in providing a consistent message to parents
- It includes the current safe sleep guidelines of The American Academy of Pediatrics; risk factors for sudden unexplained infant death; common misconceptions in regard to safe sleep practices; cultural aspects of infant safe sleep; nurses as role models and educators; and the evidence behind commonly advertised products such as baby slings, baby boxes, and owlet monitors
- This will be incorporated into the healthcare learning management software and implemented as mandatory education for nurses on labor and delivery units in VT hospitals
- To study the intervention, pre- and post educational module viewing surveys consist of 5 Likert scale questions, focusing on knowledge of evidence-based practices related to infant safe sleep and current practices, as well as current messages being given to parents. The Post-educational module survey also includes an evaluation in terms of their perceived value of the educational curriculum

RESULTS

- Nine labor and delivery nurse managers have viewed the most complete version of the module and have provided constructive feedback
- Found module to be informative and believe it will help nurses to provide a consistent and evidence-based message about infant safe sleep
- Reported feeling better able to verbalize infant safe sleep teaching to parents after viewing the module
- Believed that providing module to their nursing staff would ensure a universal response during parent education
- Strengths included the information presented regarding slings, baby boxes, owlet monitors, risk factors of sudden unexplained infant death (SUID) with differences between cultures, and myths vs. truths about SUID
- The final product has not been implemented at this time due to delays in key informant interviews by John Snow Inc., a public health research and consulting firm.
- The data obtained from these interviews will be integrated into the final draft of the educational module by the VDH



DISCUSSION

- Results were only obtained from nine participants, so the results and analysis components are limited.
- Due to minimal results obtained and delay in final implementation, it is difficult to compare this project to previous publications.
- Based on anecdotal responses from nurse managers, it seems plausible that this educational module will prepare nurses to better verbalize infant safe sleep and have a universal response during parent education.
- This is consistent with previous studies that have reported a significant increase in the knowledge acquisition, attitudes, and practice intentions of nurses with the use of safe sleep education, and that interventions focused on health care professionals train them to provide both safe sleep messages and appropriate role modeling for families.
- These results are mainly opinion based and are not generalizable at this time.

CONCLUSIONS

- Once this module is complete, it will be used as mandatory education for nurses on labor and delivery units in Vermont to help provide a consistent message to parents regarding evidence based infant safe sleep practices
- This educational module can be easily modified as new information becomes available
- Future dissemination to pediatric primary care and specialty care, as well as women's health and family practice settings

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