

Family Celebrations: A NICU Perspective

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Background:

For many parents, celebrations can be a joyful time; however, for those with an infant in the NICU, holidays can cause conflicting emotions. Parents face difficulties integrating celebration with the anxiety they may be simultaneously experiencing. Additionally, parents may feel isolated as they manage their infant's illness or bereavement while other families participate in celebratory activities. This project seeks to offer a greater understanding of the complex emotions families face with regard to child illness during holidays. The goal is to summarize the literature and offer recommendations to NICU providers on how to best assist families around celebratory events.

Content/Action:

Existent literature on family experiences in the NICU during holidays was examined, including: review of academic articles, qualitative examination of personal stories from families, and input from NICU providers.

Lessons Learned:

Recommendations are made towards financial/transportation support available to families, the utilization of parent support and activity groups, integrating volunteer assistance from previous graduate families of the NICU, and utilizing a family-centered approach to care with regard to celebrations and holidays. Additionally, emphasis is placed on the provider's knowledge of outside resources/nonprofits dedicated to supporting families in the NICU.

Implications for Practice:

A thorough understanding of the family's experience in the NICU during celebrations will help providers address challenges with effective evidence-based care. Provision of open dialogue, celebratory programs for parents within the NICU, and knowledge of outside resources can improve coping among parents. Current literature and resources in this area are limited.

Providers should consider the role of outside factors that further complicate the NICU experience, such as time divided between home and the bedside.