

Neonatal Touch Massage Therapy, Quality Improvement in Neonatal Care

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BACKGROUND

The majority of touch in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) is procedural. Infants in the NICU experience increased stressors related to the environment, medical interventions, and procedures. They also are documented to miss out on positive touch experiences. Research demonstrates improvements across a wide range of metrics in response to positive touch interventions and specifically in response to neonatal touch and massage therapy (NTMT) including pain management, state regulation, growth and weight gain, neurodevelopment, and bonding with caregivers.

Neonatal massage was initiated on a small scale in UMC's NICU approximately 4 years ago following clearance through Interdisciplinary Team and review by neonatologists. Our developmental team took steps to increase the number of therapists certified to perform neonatal massage with the goal of improving neonatal developmental care. These therapists now include our lead occupational therapist, both of the physical therapists serving the NICU, and one speech-language pathologist.

PURPOSE

The developmental team created and administered a nursing survey in order to assess nursing perceptions regarding neonatal massage. The survey served to receive feedback on the administration of the intervention since the initiative to increase provision.

Themes/areas assessed include: understanding infant massage, perception of massage benefits, consistency of services provided, and opinion regarding therapist communication/skill.

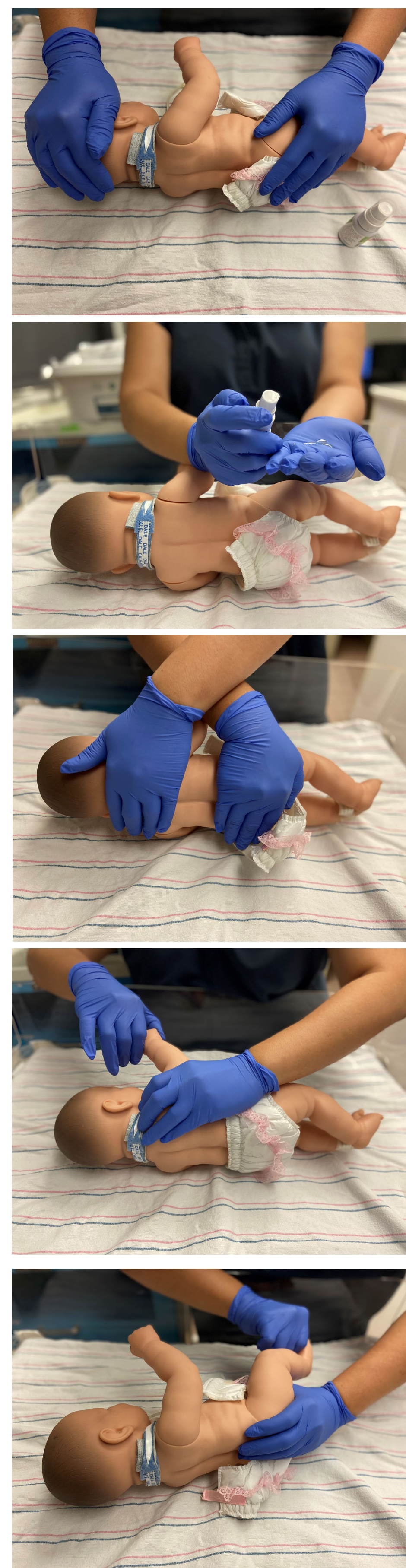
Overall goal: to support identification of strategies to facilitate improved intervention administration and interdisciplinary collaboration.

METHODS

The nursing survey was provided to all day shift nurses who have direct interaction with the therapy team and opportunity to observe neonatal massage administration.

The survey included: 10 Questions using a Likert scale of 1-3 [Disagree (1), Neutral (2), Agree (3)] as well as open-ended requests for feedback/comments.

Nurses had one week to complete the survey, which was turned in anonymously and collected by the charge RN throughout the week.



Theme	Questions	Goal
I. Understanding of infant massage as an intervention.	# 1, Open Comments	Determine education and information informing perception of the intervention.
II. Perception of massage benefits observed	# 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, Open Comments	Specific benefits as perceived by nursing staff to support physiological, emotional, and developmental needs of the infant, caregivers, and impact to patient outcomes.
III. Consistency of services provided.	# 3, Open Comments	Perception of increased intervention; need for increased services
IV. Perception of therapist communication/skill	# 2, 4, Open Comments	Assess need for further cross-training and opportunities to improve interdisciplinary collaboration.

#	QUESTIONS:	Average	Mode
1	As a nurse, do you understand the full benefits of neonatal massage or have received enough information regarding rationale? (Infant regulation/stability, weight gain/growth, feeding, etc.)	2.722222	3
2	Therapist communication regarding massages at time of treatment is adequate.	2.777778	3
3	Massage is completed with increased frequency/consistency as part of therapy sessions in the last 6-9 months.	2.444444	3
4	Neonatal massage appears to be being implemented consistently across therapists (method / skill).	2.611111	3
	<u>Do you perceive benefits in the following areas?</u>		
5	Infant body system regulation (e.g. tachypnea, tachycardia, irritability):	2.805556	3
6	Infant sleep:	2.833333	3
7	Infant comfort/pain management:	2.888889	3
8	Supports infants undergoing medication weaning process / NAS:	2.666667	3
9	Infant feeding:	2.611111	3
10	Parent/caregiver confidence with infant touch/bonding following training with therapy:	2.666667	3

Select Quotes:

- "Massage should be part of NICU cares as it's beneficial to our babies."
- "I love when our therapists coordinate with parents and teach them about benefits and techniques. It really helps with bonding and increasing comfort between parents and their babies."
- "Continue with infant massage especially on our long term patients."
- "[Nursing is] working with NICU team to bring NTMC here to get RNs certified."
- "I have not personally seen a parent being taught infant massage."

RESULTS

Survey results indicate strong nursing support for the intervention and perception of benefits to the infant, caregivers, and plan of care. Nursing feed back also reported a desire to see higher frequency of service, which is notable given the significant increase in provision of the service since additional therapists achieved certification. Nursing staff has indicated a goal bring training here to certify interested nurses in neonatal touch massage (NTMC). Some nurses reported not having had the opportunity to observe family training, which indicates a likely area for growth. Nursing indicated general agreement with skill level, but some also indicated feeling unable to comment.

CONCLUSIONS

Neonatal massage is a valued therapy intervention by nursing staff. Areas for improvement include:

- Improving communication regarding massage completion to support staff awareness regarding consistency
- Involving nursing staff to support and help coordinate caregiver training

Ongoing quality improvement goals:

- Peer observations and feedback among therapists to ensure consistent/quality of intervention
- Developing coordinated plans of care across therapists to ensure infant massage completed regularly across therapy disciplines

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Additional resources upon request.

