

Continuity of nurse caregivers and acuity in the newborn intensive care unit

Investigator(s): Peggy Settle, RN, PhD, Janet Madden, RN, CNC, BC

Contact Person: Peggy Settle

Work Address (bldg/room): Blake 10

Email Address: msettle@partners.org

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Background/ Significance: Continuity of nurse caregivers improves the nurses' ability to know and advocate for their patients. As a result of continuity of care, nurses provide a sense of predictability and are able to recognize the patient's typical responses and the need for a specific intervention. Given the vulnerability of non-verbal preterm infants, it is important to understand how the continuity of nurse caregivers impacts the preterm infant's experience. However, little is known about the impact that continuity of nurse caregivers has on the preterm infant population.

Purpose of Study: The aim of this study was to compare the continuity of nurse caregivers and level of acuity during the first two weeks of admission in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

Methods: A retrospective descriptive design was conducted utilizing existing data including; mean weekly acuity scores (Summed daily Qudramed acuity score/7) and weekly continuity of nurse caregivers score (# of nurses assigned to infant/ # of shifts per week).

Results: A repeated measures ANOVA was computed to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the continuity of nurse caregivers during the first 2 weeks after admission. Mauchly's test of sphericity was met. Tests of with-subjects effects indicate a statistically significant finding with the variables continuity of nurse caregivers and length of stay ($p = 0.016$), continuity of nurse caregivers and acuity ($p = 0.01$) and continuity of nurse caregivers, length of stay, and acuity ($p = 0.003$).

Conclusions: Findings from this study suggest that continuity of nurse caregivers is provided when an infant is experiencing high acuity. Preterm infant length of stay is inversely related to the continuity of nurse caregivers.

Implications for Nursing Practice and/or Future Research: NICU infants may benefit from consistent nurses caregivers, but further research is needed to more fully understand this phenomenon.