Clinical digest

ONE-TO-ONE NURSING IN NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE HAS LOWER DEATH RATES

Nurse-to-patient ratio found to affect rates of death for newborns

A fall in the provision of one-to-one nursing care for sick and premature newborns is linked to a higher death rate in neonatal intensive care, new study results suggest.

To assess the impact of one-to-one nursing on the monthly death rate in tertiary level neonatal units in England, researchers from the University of Warwick and Warwick Medical School used data from the National Neonatal Research Database on infants admitted to 43 tertiary level care units between 2008 and 2012.

They found that the proportion of one-to-one nursing care being provided fell by one third during this period – from an average of 9% to about 6% – and an average of 4.5% of infants receiving intensive care died every month.

The researchers calculated that a 10 percentage point fall in the proportion of intensive care days on which one-to-one nursing care was provided was associated with a monthly increase in the inpatient death rate of 0.6%. The researchers said the study results provide ‘some evidence in support of a one-to-one nurse-to-patient ratio in intensive care in England’, as recommended by guidelines from the British Association of Perinatal Medicine.


Non-Hodgkin lymphoma risk rises for those obese or overweight as adolescents

Obesity and overweight during adolescence increase the risk of developing non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL), say Israeli researchers.

Previous research has suggested that rising rates of obesity could be contributing to the worldwide increase in rates of NHL, so the researchers set out to see whether adolescent weight and height might be associated with the risk of developing the disease in later life.

Their study looked at 2,352,988 young people, aged 16 to 19 years, who were examined between 1967 and 2011. This information was then linked to the Israel National Cancer Registry, which included 4,021 cases of NHL from 1967 to 2012.

It found that adolescent overweight and obesity was associated with a 25% increased risk of NHL in later life, compared with normal weight.

When compared with the mid-range height category, shorter individuals had a 25% reduced risk of NHL, whereas the tallest had a 28% increased risk. Excess height and weight were responsible for 6% and 3% of all NHL cases respectively, the researchers said.

A possible reason for this is that height and excess nutrition in childhood could impact on inflammatory molecules and growth factors that could support the development of NHL, said the researchers, but further studies are needed to investigate this.


CBT delivered via internet may improve outcomes in body dysmorphic disorder

Internet-based cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) can significantly improve outcomes for people with body dysmorphia, suggests a new study.

Body dysmorphic disorder is a common anxiety disorder that causes a person to have a distorted view of how they look. In the largest clinical trial ever conducted on the condition, and the first to evaluate the effectiveness of an internet-based programme, UK and Swedish researchers studied 94 adults diagnosed with body dysmorphic disorder.

Participants were randomly assigned to receive either a therapist-guided, internet-based CBT programme for body dysmorphic disorder (BDD-NET), or online supportive therapy for 12 weeks. They were followed up for three months.

The researchers found that those assigned to receive BDD-NET had significant improvements in symptom severity, depression and quality of life compared with those who received supportive therapy.

Three months after the end of treatment, 56% of those receiving BDD-NET were classed as ‘responders’ – defined as a 30% or more reduction in symptoms compared with their initial scores.

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Three months after the end of treatment, 56% of those receiving BDD-NET were classed as ‘responders’ – defined as a 30% or more reduction in symptoms compared with their initial scores.
in symptoms on a recognised scoring scale – compared with 13% on supportive therapy. In addition, 39% of those receiving BDD-NET no longer met diagnostic criteria for body dysmorphic disorder. The authors said BDD-NET could be particularly useful for mild to moderately affected patients, freeing up resources for more complex patients to be treated in specialised settings.


Photos and music provide affordable treatment for pre-operative anxiety

A combination of viewing photographs and listening to music can reduce pre-operative anxiety, say Spanish researchers. To determine the effectiveness of a photographic display alone, and in conjunction with music, they studied 180 patients due to undergo various surgical procedures at the ear, nose and throat department of a hospital in Granada, Spain, between May and December 2013.

The patients, all aged between 25 and 50, received the standard intervention of a pre-anaesthetic study and pre-operative visit. Sixty patients were then randomised to have the photographic intervention alone; 60 received the photographic intervention and music; and the remainder acted as controls.

Although viewing photographs alone was no more effective at reducing anxiety than standard treatment, when it was combined with listening to music patients were less anxious, had lower blood pressure and a lower respiratory and heart rate.

The authors said the findings suggest a simple way to improve care at low cost and without medications or invasive treatments, such as by playing videos with photos and music in pre-operative waiting rooms.

Lead study author Jose Gomez-Urquiza said: ‘Creating different kinds of music lists and photograph collections, which the patient can choose depending on preference, could be an affordable low-risk treatment for pre-operative anxiety.’


Belonging to social groups after retirement could boost quality and length of life

People who are members of social groups, such as book clubs and church groups, are likely to live longer after retirement than those who are not, study results suggest. To assess the potential impact of social group membership, researchers in Spain tracked the health of 424 people for six years after they had retired, and compared them with a control group who were still working.

All the participants, who were aged at least 50 and living in England, were asked how many different organisations, clubs and societies they belonged to. Quality of life was also assessed.

The researchers found that every group membership lost after retirement was associated with a 10% drop in quality of life scores six years later. If a person belonged to two groups before retirement, and kept these up over the following six years, their risk of death was 2%, rising to 5% if they gave up membership of one, and to 12% if they gave up both. The study found no such patterns for those still in formal employment.

‘Practical interventions should focus on helping retirees to maintain their sense of purpose and belonging by assisting them to connect to groups and communities that are meaningful to them,’ the study authors said.