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A Qualitative Study on Mother's Occupational Engagement After a NICU Experience

Rachel Garcia; Mary Ann Smith, PHD, OTR/L, Julie Heftie, MS, OTR/L

Background

- 10% of women while pregnant will develop a mental health condition (WHO, n.d.).
- 13% of women develop a mental health condition after giving birth (WHO, n.d.).
- Labeled "at-risk" increases the chances of experiencing adverse mental health conditions and a NICU experience (Dunkel et al., 2012; Isaacs & Andipatin, 2020).
- "at-risk" adverse mental health conditions may consist of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression (Bieleninik et al., 2021; Osterman et al., 2023).

Problem

Mothers who are "at-risk" for complications during pregnancy have an increased probability for mental health conditions following delivery, adversely affecting their engagement in motherhood occupations.

Purpose

To conduct a qualitative study to identify how best to address the needs of "at-risk" pregnant women, through the process of semi-structured interviews with women who have experienced the NICU with their babies, and interviews with healthcare practitioners working in the NICU.

Research Question

What resources are needed for "at-risk" mothers to participate in their desired roles and occupations.

This project involved human subjects; it has been reviewed and approved by the IRB.

Methods

A Qualitative Research Study Using Convenience and Snowball Sampling Methods

- Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews and observational daily logs

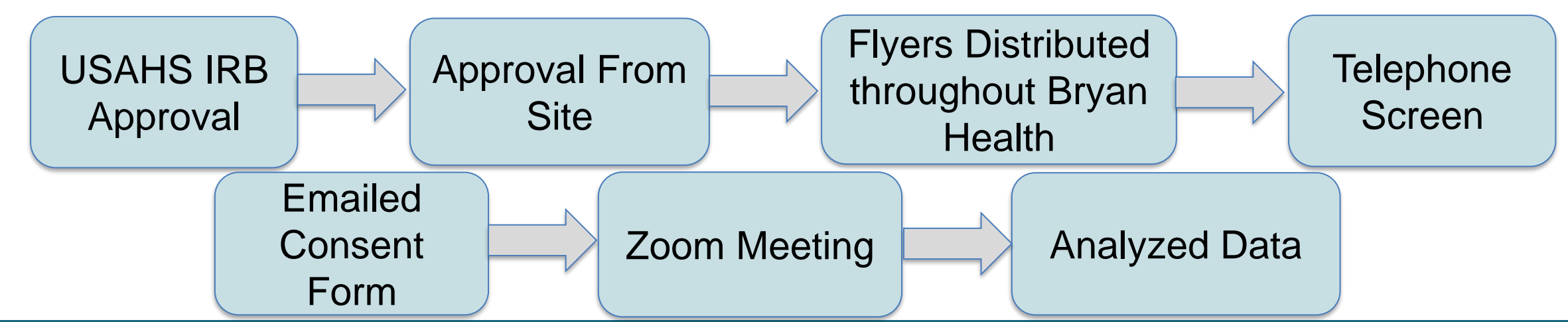
Participants

- Mothers: N=6, mothers ages 27 - 34 who experienced the NICU. Ten mothers were recruited and 4 dropped out.
- Professionals: N=5, NICU healthcare team members ages 25-49 (2 male, 3 female).

Data Analysis

- Analyzed qualitative data utilizing open coding, and memoing. Axial coding to identify the relationship between categories and sub-categories and identifying the repetitions resulting in the development of themes (Luborsky et al., 2017; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Procedures:



Results

Themes	Subthemes	Quotes
Social Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive family dynamics • Healthcare professional support • Spiritual support 	<p>"Close family, family is huge and spend a lot of time together."</p> <p>"My family was there but she [Chaplain] was like what do you need, I'm here for you. I'm going to pray for you."</p> <p>"the nurses were really helpful"</p>
Need for resources and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited programs for mothers • Unaware of programs; if any. • Limited support guidance from therapists during care. 	<p>"I had to look for the resources on my own"</p> <p>"I didn't know what the resources were."</p> <p>"I want to say that the occupational therapist was who taught us how to do the bath, but she came and was like look up this video let me know if you have any questions and was like okay bye"</p>
Interpersonal Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse psychological barriers • Emotional barriers 	<p>"I was diagnosed with all of that, depression, anxiety, PTSD"</p> <p>"I would tell my husband I was so jealous that other people leaving with their baby, and I had to leave mine."</p> <p>"I had to go to counseling for a really long time to see a psychologist because I was really really bad deep in depression it made it hard for me to be able to do anything."</p>

Discussion

Strengths:

- Completed Capstone experience in two different NICU settings.
- **Capstone student became certified in** Supporting and Enhancing NICU Sensory Experiences (SENSE) program.
- ✓ Trauma Informed Care Professional Training.
- Interviews were conducted with mothers and healthcare professionals gaining two different perspectives.

Limitations:

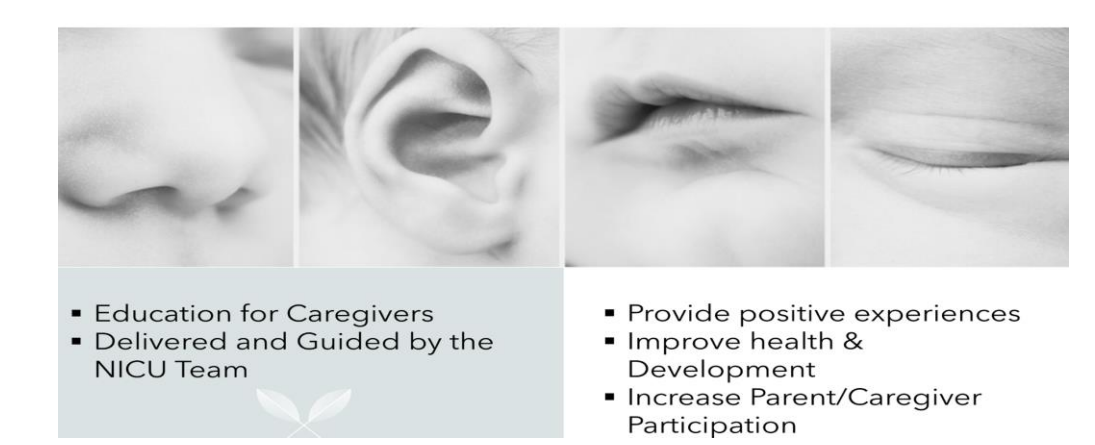
- small sample size, limited cultural diversity, and time constraints.

Dissemination:

- Presented S-E-N-S-E in-service for staff in NICU.
- Presentation of the research study findings to the site.

Future Directions:

- Publish results to an OT journal and present at TOTA.



References