



Supporting infant feeding in a Children's Hospital: developing a team approach

Kerri Frischknecht, RN, RM, IBCLC

Lactation Support Program & Donor Milk Bank
Swiss delegate for EMBA (European Milk Banking Association)
NOMAS© (Neonatal Oral Motor Assessment Scale) certified
Children's Hospital of Eastern Switzerland, Claudiusstrasse 6, 9006 St. Gallen, Switzerland,
Phone: +41 71 243 1403
E-Mail: kerri.frischknecht@kispisg.ch

Kaufmann, Nicole, dipl. Speech and Language Therapist
Head of Speech and Language, Department of Development and Rehabilitation,
Bobath-NDT trained (infants & children)
NOMAS© (Neonatal Oral Motor Assessment Scale) certified
Children's Hospital of Eastern Switzerland, Claudiusstrasse 6, 9006 St. Gallen, Switzerland,
Phone: +41 71 243 1337
E-Mail: nicole.kaufmann@kispisg.ch

Background

Over the past several years, a team approach to supporting feeding and feeding difficulties for infants and their families has developed at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Switzerland, St. Gallen. Due to the complex nature surrounding the extreme and low-birth weight premature infant as well as the sick newborn within the hospital setting, the need of an interdisciplinary approach to supporting infant feeding became more and more apparent. To initiate such a program, it was necessary to take into consideration not only in-hospital and post-discharge care of the infant but also to take into account the individual family and most importantly the unique medical and developmental profile of each child. Reviewing international literature and integrating strategies from other hospitals around the world, an interdisciplinary team-approach for supporting feeding was initiated.

Objectives

We will review the process that took place at our hospital in incorporating evidence-based knowledge from the areas of neonatal developmental medicine, neonatal nursing, breast feeding and lactation, speech and language therapy and physiotherapy to develop a team-approach in supporting feeding readiness and associated problems of feeding (including factors such as: (oral) motor development, respiratory, neurological, gastrointestinal functioning, infant regulation and family/cultural influences). We will review our current working model approach, including our guidelines for feeding readiness and stress, feeding positions and nipple choice, as well as giving a practical overview of assessment and intervention strategies that we are currently using. We hope to give an insight into the process that has and is taking place at our hospital in working together to support feeding - whether breast and/or bottle - for the premature or sick newborn.



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