

Case Study: Tameside – Improving early maternal breast milk



BACKGROUND

Maternity and Neonatal Safety Improvement programme (MatNeoSIP) aims to reduce maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality by 50% by 2025.

The preterm optimisation bundle has 7 interventions, the seventh being early maternal breastmilk for babies born <34 weeks gestation. The earlier the gestation the more likelihood of complications.

Health benefits to the preterm infant who are given maternal breast milk include lower mortality rates, lower rates of sepsis and necrotising enterocolitis, improved neurodevelopment outcomes, lower rates of bronchopulmonary dysplasia, and retinopathy of prematurity.

SOLUTION

- We need to have conversations around early expressing in the antenatal setting when a previous preterm labour has occurred, planned cervical suture procedure, early SROM and at the point of suspected early premature labour.
- We need to support women to commence early hand expression within 2 hours of birth followed by the commencement of electric pump expressing.
- The colostrum is to be transferred to NICU and administered to the baby buccally ideally within 6 hours or as early as possible within the first 24 hours.
- Hand expression prior to electric pumping is important as touch aids the production of prolactin. Having a photo of your baby will help the promotion of oxytocin.
- Introduce a preterm trolley

CHALLENGES

- This is a very sensitive subject at a time when parents may be fearful of adverse outcomes for baby.
- It is important that we avoid asking “how do you wish to feed your baby”.
- We need to approach the subject by describing it as a medicine and not a feeding choice. Women may have chosen to bottle feed and never considered breastfeeding. We are not asking mum to breastfeed; we are asking her to provide breastmilk for her baby.

LEARNING

- Be sensitive in your approach.
- Describe it as medicine rather than food.
- Hygiene is important.
- Commence massage and hand expression within 2 hours of birth.
- Reassure if there are no results it can be normal and to keep trying.
- Transfer colostrum to NICU within 6 hours of birth.
- Commence electric pumping following hand expression.
- Aim to express 8-12 times in 24 hours.
- Research has shown that women wish to be involved in the care of their preterm baby. This is something that mothers can do that nobody else can. It is empowering.

CONCLUSION

- Having a conversation as early as possible allows time to process the request.
- If parents are unaware of the benefits, they cannot possibly make an informed decision.
- Discussion first and foremost, leaflets are a tool to enhance the information provided and may assist with decision making process.
- Be open, make it clear to mum there is an opportunity to change your mind. Stressful situations can impede decision making.

