



Why create a Small Baby Program/Team/Unit - Answers to the most common questions

The small baby is at the highest risk for: prolonged hospital experience, family stress, increased hospital expenses, long term neurodevelopmental challenges, key morbidities and infant death. More and more small babies are surviving until discharge from the NICU, but not without morbidities impacting their future.

The precedent for specialty programs has been set and accepted in the NICU. We have specialty teams such as Neuro NICU, ECMO, cardiac, and surgical. Generally, the population of small babies in the NICU far outnumber those other specialty services.

What is different about a Small Baby Program/Team/Unit; we already care for the small baby, what would be different?

This program is directed at reducing variation in practice and making practice more consistent with an interdisciplinary team-based approach. This approach creates a shared mental model of care for the small baby and their family.

What are the benefits to having a Small Baby Program/Team/Unit?

A team-based model of care for ELBW infants has been shown to reduce several key morbidities these infants are prone to develop during their NICU course. It has also demonstrated improved outcomes with decreased resource utilization, such as the amount of laboratory tests and x-rays ordered. Staff and family satisfaction were also improved with the consistency in care achieved with a team-based approach.

Many of the results and benefits can be reviewed in the paper: Morris, Mindy, Cleary, John Patrick, and Soliman, Antoine. "Small Baby Unit Improves Quality and Outcomes in Extremely Low Birth Weight Infants." *Pediatrics* 136.4 (2015): e1007-e1015 which can be accessed here: <http://tinyurl.com/SmallBabyUnit>

Is a Small Baby Program/Team/Unit expensive?

This program continues to require the same number of staff currently being utilized to care for this population. There is a financial commitment to continued support of team training and education that is essential for success. There are potential expense reductions that can be realized with this model of care as well.

Why would we need help in creating a Small Baby Program/Team/Unit?

This is a complete program, not simply a quality improvement initiative, although it will certainly improve the quality of care. Most current NICU team members have a full commitment of projects, initiatives, and clinical responsibilities.

As the greater neonatal community becomes aware of the advantages of establishing a program for the care of the small baby, interest in gaining guidance and assistance from those that have established successful programs increases. We would love to partner with you in building a successful program.