



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

The small baby is at highest risk for: prolonged hospitalization, 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 that last a lifetime. Many NICUs already have specialty teams for high-risk populations such as Neuro NICU, ECMO, cardiac, and surgical. Small babies in the NICU far outnumber other specialty services and many hospitals are interested in specialty program for the most vulnerable.

### **We already care for small babies, what is different about a Small Baby Program/Team/Unit?**

A goal of Small Baby Programs is to reduce variation in practice and make practice more consistent with an interdisciplinary team-based approach. This approach creates a shared mental model of evidence-based care for the small baby and their family.

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

Some NICUs have achieved a reduction in several key morbidities these infants are prone to develop during their NICU course with a team-based model of care. Improved outcomes with decreased resource utilization, such as the amount of laboratory tests and x-rays ordered has also been shown. 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>

NICUs are starting to share their experience in developing Small Baby Programs and these are just two examples:

Banerji, Anamika I., et al. "Creating a small baby program: a single center's experience." *Journal of Perinatology* (2022): 1-4. Available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41372-021-01247-8>

Fathi, Omid, et al. "Development of a small baby unit to improve outcomes for the extremely premature infant." *Journal of Perinatology* (2021): 1-8. Available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41372-021-00984-0>

### **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.

### **Where do we start? Why would we need help in creating a Small Baby Program/Team/Unit?**

A Small Baby Program is a complete program, not simply a quality improvement initiative. Most current NICU team members have a full commitment of projects, initiatives, and clinical responsibilities. Development of a Small Baby Program requires support.

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.