

Fellow Column: New Educational Course for Neonatal Fellows Meets All Requirements of American Board of Pediatrics (ABP) and Accreditation Council in Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) Regarding Psychosocial Support

Sue Hall, MD and Melissa Scala, MD

Recruitment is now actively taking place for a study of an on-line educational program for Neonatal Fellows being conducted through an interprofessional collaboration between teams from the National Perinatal Association, Stanford University Medical School Division of Neonatology and Department of Child Psychiatry, and the NICU Parent Network. The goal of the 2-hour program is to meet the recommendations issued by both the American Board of Pediatrics (ABP) and the Accreditation Council in Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) with respect to trainee education in behavioral and mental health. The development team from Stanford includes Dr. Melissa Scala, neonatologist; Dr. Soudabeh Givrad, mother-infant dyadic psychiatrist; and Dr. LaTrice Dowtin, NICU psychologist. Together with Dr. Sue Hall of NPA and Keira Sorrells of the NICU Parent Network, they revised NPA's original Caring for Babies and Their Families course, which was recently shown to be effective at improving nurses' knowledge and confidence in providing psychosocial support to NICU families. (1) The redesigned course for Neonatal Fellows, NICU attending physicians, and Neonatal Nurse Practitioners is both shorter than the original course, and more dense, with virtually each learning point footnoted with a reference from current literature. Comprehensive bibliographies accompany each course. There are also interactive cases which encourage learners to put their skills into practice in common bedside communication scenarios with distressed parents.

“It is critical that neonatologists, and those in training to become neonatologists, realize the impact that a NICU experience can have on a family—both the infant, the infant’s parents individually and as a couple, and the entire family—and that the potential adverse developmental outcomes for the infant and adverse mental health outcomes for parents are well-described and documented”

It is critical that neonatologists, and those in training to become neonatologists, realize the impact that a NICU experience can have on a family—both the infant, the infant’s parents individually and as a couple, and the entire family—and that the potential adverse developmental outcomes for the infant and adverse mental health outcomes for parents are well-described and documented. It is even more important that those caring for babies and their families learn ways to recognize, acknowledge, and mitigate the distress families frequently experience during a NICU stay, and to promote the resilience and optimal functioning of these families.

The four courses included in the learning program include:

- 1 Using trauma-informed care as a basis for communication with NICU families
- 2 Recognizing and mitigating parental distress; promoting parental resilience
- 3 Recognizing and mitigating infant distress
- 4 Comprehensive support of NICU families (includes peer support, discharge planning, palliative care, and staff support).

The study of this program, which has been funded by the Association of Pediatric Program Directors, will survey Fellows' self-efficacy regarding interactions with NICU parents, as well as their knowledge of the topics covered in the courses at time points before, immediately after, and three months after taking the courses. Participating fellowship programs can also opt to “add-on” experiences to augment learning, such as simulation sessions where the focus will be on managing “every day” situations with NICU parents (as opposed to managing conversations around critical care issues); guided conversations with graduate NICU parents where Fellows can hear their first hand experiences and concerns; and/or evaluation of Fellows' bedside performance by current NICU parents. Stanford's IRB has already approved the study protocol, and centers signing on to participate will have to take this approval letter to their own IRBs to be included.

While Neonatal Fellowship Program Directors won't be participants in the study, they will have the opportunity to go through the learning program themselves outside of study parameters, so that they can familiarize themselves with the content being presented. Other neonatologists and nurse practitioners will be able



to access the courses directly, beginning January 1st, at www.myperinatalnetwork.com.

For more information about how your Neonatal Fellows can participate in this program, please contact the Principle Investigator, Dr. Melissa Scala, at mscala@stanford.edu, or Dr. Sue Hall at suehallmd@gmail.com.

References:

1. Hall, SL, ME Famuyide, SN Saxton, TA Moore, S Mosher, K Sorrells, CA Milford, and J Craig. 2019. "Improving Staff Knowledge and Attitudes towards Providing Psychosocial Support to NICU Parents through an Online Education Course." *Advances in Neonatal Care* epub in advance of print. https://journals.lww.com/advancesinneonatalcare/Abstract/publishahead/Improving_Staff_Knowledge_and_Attitudes_Toward.99734.aspx#pdf-link

Disclosure: There are no conflicts identified.

Source of Funding: Association of Pediatric Program Directors

NT

Corresponding Author



Sue L. Hall, MD, MSW, FAAP
Neonatologist,
St. John's Regional Medical Center,
Oxnard, CA,
suehallmd@gmail.com

Corresponding Author



Melissa Scala, MD
Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Attending Neonatologist at
Stanford University/Lucile Packard Children's Hospital (LPCH)
Stanford, California
mscala@stanford.edu

Fellow's Column is published monthly.

- Submission guidelines for "Fellow's Column":
- 2000 word limit not including references or title page.
- QI/QA work, case studies, or a poster from a scientific meeting may be submitted..
- Submission should be from a resident, fellow, or NNP in training.
- Topics may include Perinatology, Neonatology, and Younger Pediatric patients.
- No more than 20 references.
- Please send your submissions to:

Elba Fayard, MD
Interim Fellowship Column Editor
LomaLindaPublishingCompany@gmail.com

New subscribers are always welcome!

NEONATOLOGY TODAY

To sign up for a free monthly subscription,
just click on this box to go directly to our
subscription page

Readers can also follow

NEONATOLOGY TODAY

via our Twitter Feed

@NEOTODAY