

The 35th Gravens Conference on the Environment of Care for the High-Risk Newborn Preview

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The 35th Gravens Conference on the Environment of Care for the High-Risk Newborn will meet in Clearwater Beach, Florida, March 9-12, 2022. This year's meeting will be hybrid with full activities for those who attend in-person, and most of the sessions are available for attendance and participation virtually and for viewing online following the meeting. This year's theme is "Transformational Change: Making it Happen in the NICU."

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Day One of the conference is always devoted to summaries of recent research on caregiving in the NICU. Our first presentation will consider the parent perspective; Dr. Annie Janvier and Ms. Rebecca Pearce will use parents' voices to give examples of how NICU caregivers can better understand what parents view as important outcomes after discharge from the NICU.

Dr. Livio Provenzi from Italy will discuss his pioneering research on the epigenetic effects of being born early. His attention to what "footprints" are laid down early and then sustained in later behavior will help us understand why early nurturing experiences are so important.

Dr. Charlotte Tscherning brings perspectives from her work in Europe and the Middle East on neuroprotective strategies in the NICU and will emphasize the importance of developmental care as an essential component of protecting fragile brains in the NICU.

Dr. Terrie Inder will describe her team's work with premature infants in the convalescent stage of their care. This group is often neglected since their medical status is no longer critical, yet their neurodevelopmental needs remain extraordinarily important, as great, or greater than at any other stage of life.

Dr. Bobbi Pineda has conducted extensive research into a program for parent-directed neurodevelopmental stimulation for pre-

mature babies, with well-defined opportunities for interaction at each gestational age. She will describe this program, her research findings of its value, and plans for refining and expanding its use.

Dr. Daphna Barbeau has delved into the critical area of sleep organization during the fetal and perinatal periods. Insights into the importance of sleep and brain organization will emphasize the importance of identifying sleep states and designing care around sleep and arousal.

Transformational change in the NICU, the theme of the meeting, will be addressed by Dr. Jochen Profit, who will emphasize leadership actions that motivate change, channel resources, and support active problem-solving.

To demonstrate changing practices through quality initiatives, Dr. Paige Church, Ms. Lisa Sampson, and Ms. Ophelia Kwakye will join a panel discussion of their process and outcomes at Sunnybrook NICU in Toronto, Canada. The panel will represent a team approach, including neonatology, nursing, and parents.

"Ms. Kristy Love is the recipient of the 2021 Gravens Award. She demonstrated how parents could be influential long after their baby was in the NICU. Kristy not only became an advocate for parents who had a baby in intensive care but also went on to be the Executive Director of the National Perinatal Association. Dr. Michael Hynan, the 2022 Gravens awardee, gave us insights into his experience of fathering a baby in and after the NICU stay and has also taught us about the mental health needs of parents."

The Gravens awards will be awarded to two well-deserving individuals who experienced their child's hospitalization as NICU parents. Ms. Kristy Love is the recipient of the 2021 Gravens Award. She demonstrated how parents could be influential long after their baby was in the NICU. Kristy not only became an advocate for parents who had a baby in intensive care but also went on to be the Executive Director of the National Perinatal Association. Dr. Michael Hynan, the 2022 Gravens awardee, gave us insights into his experience of fathering a baby in and after the NICU stay and

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has also taught us about the mental health needs of parents. He has recently nurtured the National Network of NICU Psychologists into a thriving organization.

Day Two of the conference is divided into a track for Developmental and Family-Integrated Care (Track A) and a second track on NICU Design (Track B).

Track A this year will emphasize the importance of supporting the physiologic, behavioral, and emotional outcomes of both parents and babies.

Dr. Annie Janvier will discuss how to help parents cope in the NICU. As an experienced neonatologist and a premie parent, she has developed many useful strategies based on her own experiences.

Science has shown that babies and young children have sensitive periods during which the right environmental and caregiving experiences provide for optimal development. Dr. Pilyoung Kim will help us understand that parents also have neurophysiological and behavioral changes that influence not only their baby's outcome but also their own physical and mental health outcomes.

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Dr. Meg Parker, an expert in breastfeeding the newborn in the NICU, will describe practices that influence breastfeeding outcomes in different populations and how disparities affect those outcomes.

With the ongoing pandemic, there has been an impact on how the caregiving team, including parents, has maintained equilibrium and progress. With utmost concern for the restriction of parental presence in many NICUs, Dr. Kelly McGlothen will moderate a panel discussion of strategies to support the caregiving team.

Dr. Linda Franck will round out the discussion by reflecting on the continued evolution of family-centered care and providing a thoughtful discussion of whether it is likely to adapt to the current change in practices or meet extinction.

Track B will start with a summary from the “ReImagining the NICU” project that began with last year’s Graven Conference. Although that meeting was restricted by its virtual format, participants developed several creative, fascinating visions of the NICU of the Future. These will be summarized with a video presentation, and then attendees will be asked to provide additional perspectives that can be used to refine both minimum standards and best practices for future NICU design. Work on this project will continue during a workshop session on Friday.

We will have two New Unit presentations, one by Dr. Beau Bat-

INFANT AND FAMILY-CENTERED DEVELOPMENTAL CARE (IFCDC)

STANDARDS AND SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INFANTS IN THE INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

SYSTEMS THINKING IN COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS



- Are the baby and family central to the mission, values, environment, practice & care delivery of IFDCD in the unit?
- Are the parents of each baby fully integrated into the team and treated as essential partners in decision-making and care of the infant?
- What are the strategies and measurements used to improve and sustain IFDCD in the unit?

POSITIONING & TOUCH FOR THE NEWBORN

- Are the positioning plans therapeutic and individualized, given the care needs and development of the baby?
- Are the positioning and touch guidelines continually reviewed by the team, including the parents, and adapted to meet the changing comfort needs of the baby?



SLEEP AND AROUSAL INTERVENTIONS FOR THE NEWBORN

- Can the team confidently describe the “voice” or behavioral communication of the baby?
- Are the baby's unique patterns of rest, sleep, and activity documented by the team and protected in the plan of care?

SKIN-TO-SKIN CONTACT WITH INTIMATE FAMILY MEMBERS

- Is the practice of skin-to-skin contact supported and adjusted to the comfort needs of each baby, parent, & family member?
- Are the parents & family members supported to interact with the baby to calm, soothe, & connect?



REDUCING AND MANAGING PAIN AND STRESS IN NEWBORNS AND FAMILIES



- Are parents supported to be present and interactive during stressful procedures to provide non-pharmacologic comfort measures for the baby?
- Are there sufficient specialty professionals to support the wellbeing of the team, including parents, families, and staff? Examples include mental health, social, cultural, & spiritual specialists.

MANAGEMENT OF FEEDING, EATING AND NUTRITION DELIVERY

- Are the desires of the m/other central to the feeding plan? Is this consistently reflected in documentation with input of the m/other?
- Does the feeding management plan demonstrate a feeding & nutrition continuum from in-hospital care through the transition to home & home care?



WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS?
VISIT: [HTTPS://NICUDESIGN.ND.EDU/NICU-CARE-STANDARDS/](https://nicudesign.nd.edu/nicu-care-standards/)

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ton and Mary Beth Miller from St. John's Hospital in Springfield, Illinois, and one from Dr. Bolaji Famuyide and her team from the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, MS.

Track B will conclude with a “Crowdsourcing” session, in which attendees who have challenges in designing or renovating their existing NICUs will bring those to the floor for discussion by others in the audience, which will include several experts who will be in

attendance.

Day Two at Gravens is always designed as a half-day of formal meetings, allowing informal discussions and meetings in the afternoon or a free afternoon on the beach to catch up on other projects, followed by a beach party in the evening.

Day Three will begin with a special plenary session on “Resilience and Change” presented by Natalie Johnson, a specialist who teaches these skills to teams. While this topic was planned before the COVID pandemic, it is fortuitous that its presentation had to be delayed until this year, when the topic has become more important and timely than ever. Ms. Johnson will present a workshop immediately following this plenary session entitled “Stress as a Superpower.”

Day Three will continue with workshops that will allow in-depth, seminar-type exploration of topics presented by speakers during the plenary sessions. There will also be two sessions of abstract presentations on topics that include developmental care, family support, and NICU design.

Day Four is a half-day session devoted to exploring new strategies for family support. Dr. John Ibrahim, a neonatologist and father of a NICU baby, will describe his experience as a physician and a parent, providing lessons that have made him a better caregiver.

Dr. Tiffany Willis is a NICU psychologist who will discuss psychosocial support for the often forgotten fathers and partners in the NICU, whose needs can be different from those of the birthing parent.

Dr. Heather Burris is a neonatologist who will help us explore health care inequities from the perspective of molecular biology, describing how the effects of inequities are more than skin deep.

Dr. Odie Ehie, a pediatric anesthesiologist whose interests include diversity, equity, and inclusion, will lead us on a journey to recognizing and responding to microaggressions in the clinical setting so that everyone can make a difference.

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