

Gravens By Design: The 36th Annual Gravens Conference on the Environment of Care for High-Risk Newborns: The Future is NOW for Babies, Families, and Systems

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The 36th Annual Gravens Conference on the Environment of Care for High-Risk Newborns: The Future is NOW for Babies, Families, and Systems will be held March 8-11, 2023, in Clearwater Beach, FL, and Online Worldwide

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The Gravens Conference continues to evolve, conceptually and operationally, along with neonatology and the needs of caregivers and families. Operationally, virtual presentations were introduced in 2018. The 2020 meeting was held in person the week before most of the country went into a COVID lockdown. The 2021 meeting was entirely virtual, and then in 2022, we had our first hybrid meeting with technology that was still rudimentary. The 2023 meeting and future meetings will be hybrid, with robust programming for in-person and those who participate online. Day 1 of each Gravens Conference focuses on the scientific foundations for that year’s theme. In 2023, we will highlight the evolution of developmental and family-centered care from a “nice to have” adjunct of traditional medical and surgical care to its role now as an essential aspect of neonatal care, one that research has established as an important element for achieving optimal outcomes in high-risk newborns.

In 2023, Day 1 will include presentations that review and enlarge the importance of the family in comprehensive neonatal care. The stage will be set in our first presentation, which asks, “What happens with babies and families after they leave the NICU?” Dr. Saraj Saigal, who co-founded a global organization that has followed those babies into adulthood, and April Laramie, an adult born extra early, will give us a perspective on the physiological, social, and emotional outcomes that they have researched and experienced.

Several presentations will follow that present the evidence that families have a crucial role in caring for NICU babies. Dr. Raylene Phillips and Dr. Kristina Reber will present their experience with specialized Small Baby Units in Loma Linda and Columbus, Dr. Bjorn Westrup will present the experience with NICU Couplet Care in Sweden, and Dr. Liisa Lehtonen will review the European experience with the Close Collaboration with Parents program. Dr. Sonia Bonifacio will present the upcoming Vermont Oxford initiative entitled “All Care is Brain Care,” for which family participa-

tion is an integral component.

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The final presentation on Day 1 will address the ethics of family-centered care. Dr. Annie Janvier, a neonatologist and a parent of a baby who spent time in the NICU, will provide a personal and professional perspective on supporting families. As a researcher and writer, she is a well-known advocate for individualized parent and family care in the NICU. She will give us her perspective on ethical and practical approaches to supporting parents.

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Day 2 of Gravens is devoted to concurrent tracks, further exploring the primary theme of the meeting. The Developmental and Family Centered Care track will bring together representatives from the major evidence-based developmental and family-centered programs. Often it is challenging for NICU staff to determine the best evidence-based program to implement in their unit, so speakers representing NIDCAP, NBO, FNI, COPE, SENSE, and FICare will each give an overview of their respective programs. These presentations will help the audience understand the importance of implementing an evidence-based program and the similarities and differences among the programs presented. Attendees will be encouraged to discuss with the presenters to help them determine if one of these programs will formally meet their desire to implement key elements of family-centered care.

The second track of Day 2 is devoted to NICU Design. While the topics in this track are most relevant to those considering new construction or major renovation of their NICU in the next few years, many of the concepts and experiences presented can be

implemented in existing NICUs where major construction may not be feasible in the near future. The first two presentations, “Use of Color in Hospital Design” and “Access to Nature in the NICU,” will stimulate consideration of possible enhancements for most NICUs regardless of their age or design. New Unit presentations will follow these, one each from a level II, III, and IV NICU. This track will conclude with a discussion of proposed changes to the Recommended Standards for Newborn ICU Design and a “crowd-sourcing” session, in which attendees can pose questions to experts in the audience to help them pursue new construction or renovation projects.

The afternoon of Day 2 will be free of formal presentations but is often used for informal meetings and conversations among participants. That evening, the hotel’s beachfront will serve as the backdrop for dinner, music, dancing, and networking.

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Day 3 will begin with a plenary session entitled “Difficult Conversations,” in which Natalie Johnson, a consultant in wellness promotions for large organizations, will help attendees address this common challenge in neonatal care. Day 3 will continue with workshops, including one by Ms. Johnson and many of the Plenary speakers. These are designed for attendees to interact with speakers in a small group format and ask questions “up close and personal.” Additional workshops will focus on supporting sleep in the NICU, implementing the Infant and Family-Centered Developmental Care Standards, the new Family-Centered Care Task Force Quality Improvement Learning Community, and family engagement, especially concerning diversity and equity.

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Day 4 is a Saturday; that half-day session will begin with a parent’s perspective, during which Kimberly Novod will take the group through her NICU parent journey, describing how she was able to turn tragedy into triumph. Then we will focus on factors outside the NICU that affect what happens in the NICU; Dr. Gaby Cordova Ramos will discuss social determinants of health and how they affect NICU care. Dr. Yarden Fraiman will discuss race, ethnicity,

culture, and antiracism in clinical care. Troy Savage will explore health equity and help the audience understand what they can do in their specific unit to engender health equity. Dr. Susan Niermeyer will discuss healthy equity at a global level and how individuals can make a macro difference. Finally, Joy Browne and Bob White sum up the conference and motivate everyone for March 2024.

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