

Standard of Care to Incorporate Mental Health Care for NICU Families: TECaN Embarks on National Advocacy Campaign

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The National Perinatal Association (NPA) is an interdisciplinary organization that strives to be a leading voice for perinatal care in the United States. Our diverse membership is comprised of healthcare providers, parents & caregivers, educators, and service providers, all driven by their desire to give voice to and support babies and families at risk across the country.

Members of the NPA write a regular peer-reviewed column in Neonatology Today.



We are thrilled to announce the official launch of the Carousel Care Advocacy Campaign. This effort is led by the group TECaN (Training and Early Career Neonatologists), a subspecialty group of the American Academy of Pediatrics. This campaign focuses on the need for mental health care for NICU families throughout the NICU journey. We know that a need for mental health support for NICU families is a long-standing need preceding the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the advent of the pandemic has exacerbated these needs and brought the mental health concerns of families into sharper focus. We know from pre-pandemic research that about half of NICU parents at any given time suffer from anxiety or depression during a NICU stay and that a third of parents go on to develop PTSD after a NICU admission. We believe that the need is even higher with the onset of the pandemic and its numerous added challenges and burdens on families. Despite the high needs and impact on child and family outcomes, there is no universal NICU standard to address familial mental health. Due to this, TECaN has ambitiously resolved to take on the task of altering the standard of care within the NICU to include mental health care through all-around support and well-being for NICU families via the national advocacy campaign, *Carousel Care* (#CarouselCare).

tive Care, Social Work, Child Life, Nursing, and NICU parents to create content and resources delivered throughout the campaign. The campaign, launched in October 2021, will continue to deliver content through live webinars (also viewable post live date) and supplemental materials, which can all be found on the campaign's website through October 2022 (<https://www.aap.org/en/community/aap-sections/sonpm/tecan/advocacy/>).

The content over the course of the year will be organized into four main phases.

Phase one focuses on the prenatal period for parents who learn that they may require a future NICU admission for their child's survival and the general need for mental health resources from the start of the NICU journey. Webinars and supplemental materials found on our website will include topics on managing parental expectations and addressing emotional needs in the prenatal consult, understanding the scope of mental health challenges of NICU families, and special consideration populations of diversity, equity, and inclusion relating to NICU mental health. Live webinars will take place monthly from October 2021 through December 2021, and all webinars will be available for viewing on our website after their original air date.

Phase two of the campaign will focus on the time during a NICU admission. Topics will include mental health impacts upon the interrupted bonding of the parent-infant dyad, screening for parental mental health concerns throughout the NICU admission, and potential mental health interventions during the NICU stay. This content will be delivered beginning in January 2022 through March 2022.

Phase three will focus on the NICU discharge process and continuity of care after NICU admission. Topics will include establishing mental health resources for families post-discharge, comforting families during bereavement, and helping families thrive after the NICU. This content will be delivered beginning in April 2022 through June 2022.

The fourth and final phase of the campaign

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TECaN is partnering with multidisciplinary experts from across the country to educate and empower NICU providers on addressing mental health needs for NICU families adequately. TECaN is teaming up with experts in Neonatology, Psychiatry, Psychology, Maternal, and Fetal Medicine, Pallia-

will focus on incorporating these new standards of care into NICUs across the country in a wide range of clinical settings with variable resources. Topics will include webinars on including NICU family mental health within your NICU and caring for the caregiver. In recognition of each unit's unique challenges, we strive to provide means for all NICUs to consider adopting these changes into clinical practice. We also recognize that it is vital to support our team members' mental health to care for families effectively. One cannot pour from an empty cup, so we will also address caring for ourselves as providers. This content will be delivered beginning in July 2022 through October 2022.

“TECaN, the campaign’s content experts and our parent experts are ambitiously working towards the goal of creating a universal standard of care that systematically addresses familial mental health in the NICU. We strongly believe in the promise of this campaign, and we encourage you to join us in creating this paradigm shift.”

TECaN, the campaign's content experts and our parent experts are ambitiously working towards the goal of creating a universal standard of care that systematically addresses familial mental health in the NICU. We strongly believe in the promise of this campaign, and we encourage you to join us in creating this paradigm shift. To join in our efforts of this campaign, please visit our AAP TECaN website, where you can find the links to our webinars and the content delivered over the course of the year. Together, let us turn a roller coaster of uncertainty for our NICU families into a ride of all-around support through Carousel Care.



(<https://www.aap.org/en/community/aap-sections/sonpm/tecan/advocacy/>.)

Disclosure: The National Perinatal Association www.nationalperinatal.org is a 501c3 organization that provides education and advocacy around issues affecting the health of mothers, babies, and families.

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