

DELAYED ABILITY BUT NOT DIFFERENTLY ABLED – MESSAGE FOR PARENTS OF HIGHLY PREMATURE INFANTS

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ABSTRACT:

Prematurity is the second most common cause of death in infants born premature. Parents of premature children often come across a difficult state of their life where their new born child is kept in NICU. Most of the parents does not come to know what is going on with their child life. In present day modern medicine has evolved in such a manner that even a 24th week born child can be saved. Problem starts when an infant whose vitals are stable is discharged. This is the transition phase from hospital to home where he has to be taken care of well. Here with we are sharing our experience of being health care professionals and parents of Identical twins born at 27.5 week of gestational life. This information may be useful for many parents who face the similar situation. We conclude by conveying that all premature children are not disabled. They may be delayed in the development but they should not be termed as disabled.

KEY WORDS: High Risk, Disability, Delayed Development, Parents concern.

INTRODUCTION:

Child is the most precious gift to any parent. Feelings and emotions a parent goes through once the child is born is unimaginable. Every parent faces a tough time if the child has to stay in NICU after birth. The stay in NICU becomes mandatory if the child is born Premature. Prematurity increases the risk for life or delay in development of the child. Every premature infant does not have life risk nor severe developmental delay.

The care in NICU plays a significant role in the process of child development. Risk can be stratified and measures can be taken with the availability of modern day NICU facilities. The stability in vitals is targeted till the baby reaches gestational age, also an important sign for transition from hospital to home care.

The Corrected age plays a significant role in estimating the milestones achievement of the premature infant. Chronological age minus the number of days born preterm will give corrected age. Parents of premature children will not be aware of the corrected age. They compare the development of their child with the same age peer group and becomes conscious. This will definitely trigger them to go developmental evaluation.

Yes, Developmental evaluation is mandatory if the infant was at high risk during birth and follow up plays a crucial role. The infants who were born premature but the risks have been reduced with appropriate NICU care and discharged without any complications to brain will not be affected with any developmental delay. Awareness

has to be given for the parents about this and should be asked to keep a note on attainment of milestones rather than thinking about disabled development.

Literature suggests that usually premature children will catch up with the normal developing children by the age of two years.¹ The use of environment, freedom for exploration, stimulating their inner drive plays a major role in their development. Slowness in development is not a permanent disability but the process of body growth and brain maturity which occurs slowly in them will bring a gap in comparison to normal children.

CASE DESCRIPTION:

We have come across the same situation of being parents to twin babies born premature at the age of 27.5 weeks with birth weight of 700, 750 gms respectively as mother faced uncontrolled gestational diabetes. Babies were delivered by caesarian section and kept in NICU as they had breathing issues. they were in NICU for 65 days until their vitals become stable. They were discharged on request of parents when the babies reached 1200 gm weight. They are presently 15 months' chronological age and 1 year corrected age. They can able to stand and walk without support for few steps. Thus it gives us a clear information that all premature children may not be disabled. They can catch up the normal going children by 2 years of age. When the premature infants are discharged the transition care from hospital to home plays an important role in the recovery of the child.²

CONCLUSION:

Thus, dear parents let the baby explore the environment, give freedom to his movements and allow him to try for various combinations of movements. Though he/she may take time but never fails in attaining milestones. This short communication of ours may help the parents of premature children who always have a dilemma that why their kid is slow in development.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None

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