

Supporting parents in the newborn period using the newborn behavioral observations program

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A recent report outlines the need for an increase in understanding and education of the workforce in the UK in the areas of perinatal mental health. The Newborn Behavioral Observations (NBO) developed by J Kevin Nugent and colleagues in 2007, was introduced to the UK in 2009. It is based on the Brazelton Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale (NBAS) and is recommended in the UK National Health Visiting Specification Plan (2014/2015; 2015/2016) and in the Healthy Child Programme (Department of Health, 2009). The NBO is a relationship-building tool highlighting baby

behaviors from birth to 3 months old. Thousands of practitioners working with parents and babies in hospitals and the community in the National Health Service in the UK are using the NBO. It has been evaluated positively by practitioners and parents. This talk will describe a survey where we aimed to evaluate the use of the NBO by practitioners about 7 months after the training course. The results show that most practitioners are: focusing on specific family needs and babies' behavioral states (using parts of the NBO), using it as a whole routinely, and/or using its principles (based on understanding baby development and parenting). Practitioners are particularly keen to focus on items related to baby's social/interactive skills and crying/consolability and 84% are using the NBO with both fathers and mothers.

Practitioners reported that the most valued benefit of the NBO was an increased enhancement of practice and knowledge about baby behavior. Opportunities for improvement were also identified: the need for practice to become proficient using the tool, support on implementation and continued professional development.

Biography

Joanna Hawthorne is a Developmental Psychologist, who has worked in the field of baby behavior and support for early parent-infant relationships for 35 years. She has worked with parents and babies in neonatal units, as well as community-based professionals. She was a Senior Research Associate at the University of Cambridge from 1995-2004. She was a co-founder and CEO of the Brazelton Centre UK for 20 years. She is an International Master trainer in the NBAS and NBO, Council member of the Maternity and Newborn Forum, Royal Society of Medicine, a former committee member of the Association for Infant Mental Health (UK), a member of the First 1001 critical days from conception to 2 years coalition, a peer reviewer, and an invited speaker and author.

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