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Early discharge from the neonatal unit, who does it actually benefit?

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Over the last 10 years, there has been a drive to move health services from hospital to community. Part of this has been driven forward, by hospitals participating in the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative. The role of the community neonatal nurse is to ensure that there would be no brakes, therefore this initiative will continue being driven forward right until the parents and infant have settled in their home environment. The data from our service has identified an increase of infants being discharged early, mostly before their expected date of delivery, with home oxygen and at times with nasogastric feeding tube. Since 2009, at least 18 infants are discharged per year from our neonatal unit, and at least five infants are discharged per year with nasogastric tube feeding. This indicates an estimated average of £600 per day being saved per cot space. The argument would be that, not only do we save financial and increase the cot availability, but this would reduce the parental anxiety and fears by discharging these complex infants to not only bond with their families but increase their developmental milestones. Two recent surveys done within our service have shown that parents value the support they receive at home from our service, and felt there was no increased stress caring for their baby on home oxygen.

Biography

Tendai Nzirawa completed her Under-graduate Diploma in Nursing in 2005 at City University, London and Bachelor of Science with Honours in Nursing (Neonatal Care) in 2012 at City University, London. Currently, she is pursuing his/her Master of Science in Nursing (Neonatal Care) at London Southbank University, London. Since 2010, she has been involved in setting up and running a Neonatal Parent Support Group with other health professionals. She set up a Down Syndrome Parent Support Group, run it with the assistance of two mothers who have children with Down syndrome. In 2012, she participated at European Academy of Pediatric Societies.

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