

Project Updates: NCAST (Nursing Child Assessment Satellite Training)

Letourneau, N. (2001). Improving Adolescent Parent-Infant Interactions: A Pilot Study. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, Vol 16, (1), 53-62.

Adolescent parents are at high risk for having less sensitivity to infant cues, and less verbal responsiveness to their infants, as well as being more likely to use physical punishment. Such characteristics potentially place infants of adolescent mothers at risk for less high quality interactions and impaired infant development.

To determine if Keys to Caregiving®, as a nurse delivered intervention program, can improve interactions and contingent responsiveness of adolescent mothers and their newborns, this study recruited 13 adolescent mothers who had recently given birth to normal healthy newborns. Subjects were randomized into an intervention group or a control group where all dyads received a weekly visit from a qualified nurse for six weeks. The intervention group was presented with the structured Keys to Caregiving® program consisting of one booklet and topic per week. The control group did not have a structured program. Other scales were administered to assess depression, difficult life circumstances, infant feeding and teaching (NCATS/NCAFS) and infant development.

No significant differences were found in relation to the mother's or infant's gender, infant gestational age and birth weight, mother's years of education, depression, economic status or life circumstances. Of significance were the dyads in the intervention group who had received the Keys to Caregiving® program. Scores were higher on total scores for parent, child and parent-child interaction for both the NCATS and NCAFS. In addition, the group mean score for the infant development scale was statistically significant for the intervention group.

This study, in keeping with previous findings, suggests that Keys to Caregiving® influenced the intervention group parent behavior in a positive way, ie: an increase in the proportion of responsive interactions between parents & their infants. From a clinical perspective, the home visit nurse reported that intervention group parents asked questions that revealed their newly found sensitivity and responsiveness to the infant and that parents in the control group were less systematic and organized with questions.

Letourneau suggests that nurses are in a pivotal position to “assist new adolescent mothers to develop sensitive and responsive interactions with their newborns in both hospital and community settings”(p. 61).