

# Research Reviews

## Home Visiting by Paraprofessionals and Nurses

Olds,D., Robinson,J., O'Brien,R., Luckey,D., Pettit,L., Henderson,C., Ng,R., Sheff,K., Korfmacher,J., Hiatt,S. & Talmi,A. (2002). Home Visiting by Paraprofessionals and by Nurses: A Randomized, Controlled Trial. Pediatrics,110(3):486-96.

To examine the effectiveness of home visiting by paraprofessionals and by nurses, as separate means of improving maternal and child health, a randomized trial was conducted in public and private care settings in Denver, Colorado. All the home visitors were trained in the Nurse Family Partnership Program model, which had previously demonstrated effectiveness with nurses as home visitors. Of the 1187 eligible pregnant women, 735 were randomized to control, paraprofessional, or nurse conditions. Nurses and paraprofessionals completed an average of 6-7 home visits during pregnancy and 16-21 visits from birth to the child's second birthday.

The results indicate that paraprofessional-visited and nurse-visited mother-child pairs, in which the mother had low psychological resources, interacted with other mothers more responsively than their control-group counterparts. Within the first year of birth the following advantages of the Nurse visited dyads versus the controls were seen for nurse visited infants:

Pregnancy — mothers who smoked had reductions in the cotinine levels

6 months – less emotional vulnerability to fear stimuli

6 months – infants whose mothers had low psychological resources had more emotional vitality in response to joy/anger stimuli

21 months- infants of mothers with low psychological resources had less language delay

24 months – infants of mothers with low psychological resources had better mental development.

24 months – women had fewer subsequent pregnancies (29% vs 41%) and births (12 vs 19%)

24 months – mothers worked more in year two (6.83 vs 5.65 months).

There were no statistically significant program effects for the nurses on women's use of ancillary prenatal services, educational achievement, use of welfare, or their children's temperament or behavior problems. For most outcomes on which either visitor produced significant effects, the paraprofessionals typically had effects that were about half the size of those produced by nurses.