

## How to Incorporate a New Safe Sleep Program in the NICU

In this feature, Neonatal Intensive Care interviews clinicians and healthcare providers about the actual application of specific products and therapies. This interview is with Debra Lewis, BSN, RNC-NIC, Staff Nurse, NICU, Baptist Health Lexington (KY).

**Neonatal Intensive Care:** When did you introduce the HALO® Safer Way to Sleep program in the NICU?

**Debra Lewis:** We have been using this program for about three years in the NICU.

**NIC:** What inspired you to incorporate a new safe sleep program?

**DL:** I attended a national neonatal nursing conference where safe sleep practices were addressed. I also met the HALO representative and learned about the tools they make available to hospitals at no cost. This information inspired me to re-examine the safe sleep practices in our own hospital's NICU. In addition, my colleague who helped me spearhead the program lost her own baby to SIDS, so safe sleep is a topic that is very important and, of course, personal to us.

**NIC:** How did you go about evaluating your current safe sleep practices?

**DL:** Working with the support of our neonatologists, the nurse researcher and our Institutional Review Board (IRB), we did an assessment of our nurses' safe sleep behaviors to compare to the recommended practices. As we know well that what nurses do in the hospital is often modeled or imitated by the parents. It is critically important that the way our nurses handle the preemies meets the highest standards of safe sleep. Our research revealed that the nurses were not always putting the babies in cribs as the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended, particularly when we used blankets for swaddling.

**NIC:** How did you re-educate your staff?

**DL:** We created a self-learning module for all the NICU and Mother Baby nurses to ensure their safe sleep knowledge was up-to-date. Unbeknownst to the nurses, we continued our assessment at the one-month, three-month and six-month marks to ensure that everyone was maintaining the highest level of safe sleep practices, and we were thrilled to have positive results every time. After discovering our biggest area of concern was the bundling of infants, we began using HALO® SleepSack® Swaddles in the NICU, an initiative supported by administration and the medical staff.

**NIC:** What kind of support did you have from the neonatologists on staff?

**DL:** The doctors in the NICU were very much in favor of the research, and after seeing our data they supported the



introduction of the Safer Way to Sleep program as a way for the nurses to practice and teach safe sleep. As a matter of fact, the neonatologists personally covered the shipping costs for the HALO SleepSack Swaddles (which are free to all hospitals).

**NIC:** What has been the response from parents?

**DL:** Parents are very interested in learning about safe sleep for their baby, and we make a point of reviewing this with them before discharge. Since many of the parents of preemies have their baby shower after the baby is born, we suggest that they add wearable blankets to their registry. Our hospital also added the HALO SleepSack Swaddle to the gift shop to facilitate this as well.

**NIC:** Do you ever interact with grandparents on safe sleep?

**DL:** Since our babies may be in the NICU for an extended period

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we welcome grandparent visits if supported by the parents. Our staff reviews safe sleep with them as well as well as the parents as they may provide childcare services at some point for the baby. Even an occasional sleepover at the grandparents' home requires safe sleep practices.

**NIC:** How do you feel personally about this new program?

**DL:** After a career of more than 40 years, I can honestly say that doing the research and initiating the HALO® Safer Way to Sleep program has been an inspiration. The support of the hospital for research that leads us to be better in our profession and have a positive effect on the patient experience and safety is always a win-win for all.



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