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ORAL FEEDING SKILLS OF PREMATURE INFANTS

by
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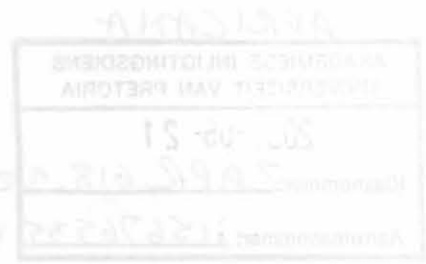
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SUMMARY

ORAL FEEDING SKILLS IN PREMATURE INFANTS

by

Karina Johanna Uys

SUPERVISOR: Professor Brenda Louw

CO -SUPERVISOR: Professor Renè Hugo

DEPARTMENT: Communication Pathology

DEGREE: M Communication Pathology

Early intervention is a rapid-growing, comprehensive science. The premature infant forms a significant part of the population who requires early intervention services from the speech-language therapist. Oral feeding problems represent a large part of the unique set of problems which premature infants experience. A lack of information in the literature was identified in terms of: firstly, the comprehensive description of oral feeding skills in premature infants and secondly, a comprehensive evaluation tool which would enable the researcher to describe these oral feeding skills.

The aim of this study was to describe the oral feeding skills of the premature infant during bottle- and cup-feeding. The different effects of the two feeding methods on the physiological status of the subjects were also examined.

The study comprises a theoretical and an empirical section. The theoretical section purports a literature review. Information obtained from recent literature on the premature infant with his/her specific problems as well as the on the mechanism of the whole swallowing process forms the underpinning of the empirical study. The empirical study comprises two phases. The first phase



purports the development and design of a comprehensive oral feeding evaluation tool, namely, the “Feeding Evaluation Form for At-Risk Infants” (FEFARI). The second phase was executed by applying the FEFARI to 42 premature infants of four different gestational ages (34-37 weeks), to enable the researcher to describe all aspects involved in oral feeding in premature infants. A descriptive research design was used, as the oral feeding skills of the subjects had to be observed in their natural conditions. Information regarding the risk factors for feeding problems, the state and behaviour of the subjects and the non-nutritional and nutritional sucking skills during bottle- and cup-feeding, was obtained with the FEFARI. This information is described, discussed, analysed and interpreted according to the aims of this research project.

The results of this study prove the FEFARI to be invaluable for the description of the oral feeding skills of premature infants. The information obtained with the FEFARI is also valuable for the planning of appropriate, effective and accountable oral feeding therapy for premature infants.

These findings have important implications for the management of oral feeding of premature infants. This study encourages the early involvement of the speech-language therapist/feeding specialist with the premature infant in the NICU. Further research is recommended to expand and support the findings of this study.

KEY WORDS:

Premature infant, NICU, oral feeding skills, nutritional sucking, non-nutritional sucking, swallowing, feeding problems, high risk factors, speech-language therapist, feeding specialist.



OPSOMMING

ORALE VOEDINGS VAARDIGHEDE IN PREMATURE BABAS

deur

Karina Johanna Uys

LEIER: Professor Brenda Louw
MEDELEIER: Professor Renè Hugo
DEPARTEMENT: Kommunikasie Patologie
GRAAD: M.Kommunikasiepatologie

Vroeë intervensie is 'n snel groeiende, omvangryke vakgebied. Die premature baba maak 'n beduidende deel uit van die populasie wat vroeë intervensie gelewer deur die spraak-taal terapeut, benodig. Orale voedingsprobleme maak 'n groot deel uit van die unieke probleme wat die premature baba ervaar. 'n Leemte is in die literatuur geïdentifiseer in terme van: eerstens, die omvattende beskrywing van die orale vaardighede van die premature baba en tweedens, 'n omvattende evaluasieinstrument wat die navorser in staat sal stel om die voedingsvaardighede te beskryf.

Die doel van die studie was om die orale voedingsvaardighede van die premature baba te beskryf tydens bottel- en koppievoeding. Die verskillende uitwerking van die twee voedingsmetodes op die proefpersone se fisiologiese toestand is ook ondersoek.

Die studie bestaan uit 'n teoretiese en 'n empiriese gedeelte. Die teoretiese gedeelte bevat 'n literatuuroorsig. Inligting verkry uit resente literatuur oor die premature baba met sy spesifieke probleme, sowel as die meganisme van die

slukproses, dien as begroning van die empiriese ondersoek. Die empiriese ondersoek bestaan uit twee fases. Die eerste fase behels die ontwerp en ontwikkeling van 'n omvattende orale voedingsevaluasie-instrument, naamlik die "Feeding Evaluation Form for At-Risk Infants" (FEFARI). Die tweede fase bestaan uit die toepassing van die FEFARI op 42 premature babas van 4 verskillende gestasie-ouderdomme (34-37 weke) om die navorser in staat te stel om alle aspekte wat met orale voeding van die premature baba te make het, te kan beskryf. 'n Beskrywende navorsingsontwerp is gebruik aangesien die proefpersone se voedingsgedrag in 'n natuurlike omgewing waargeneem moes word. Inligting met betrekking tot die risikofaktore vir voedingsprobleme, die toestand en gedrag van die proefpersone, die nie-nutrisionele sowel as die nutrisionele suigvaardighede tydens bottel- en koppievoeding is met behulp van die FEFARI versamel. Hierdie inligting is na aanleiding van die navorsingsdoelstellings bespreek, ontleed en geïnterpreteer.

Die resultate van die studie toon dat die FEFARI waardevol was vir die beskrywing van die orale voedingsvaardighede van die premature beba. Die inligting verkry van die FEFARI kan ook sinvol aangewend word om 'n toepaslike, effektiewe en verantwoordbare voedingsterapie vir premature babas te beplan.

Die bevindinge hou belangrike implikasies in vir die hantering van orale voeding in premature babas. Die studie moedig ook betrokkenheid van die spraak-taal terapeut/voedingspesialis by die premature baba in die neonatale eenheid so spoedig moontlik, aan. Verdere navorsing word aanbeveel ter uitbreiding en bevestiging van hierdie navorsingsresultate.

SLEUTELWOORDE:

premature baba, neonatale eenheid (NICU), orale voedingsvaardighede, nutrisionele suig, nie-nutrisionele suig, sluk, voedingsprobleme, hoë risiko faktore, spraak-taal terapeut, voedingspesialis.



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