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Ireland in the 21st century: Are neonatal units providing culturally sensitive care to infants born to parents from the Traveller community ? : Nurses and Midwives perspectives

Irene Beirne, RGN, RM, RNP, RANP, DIP Social Studies, MSc
Nursing/Midwifery, Candidate Advanced Nurse Practitioner Neonatology

Carmel Bradshaw, Lecturer in Midwifery, Academic Supervisor, Dept. of
Nursing and Midwifery, University of Limerick



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Background

With admission to Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), parents struggle with:

- An unfamiliar environment
- Dealing with fears for their infants' wellbeing.
- These challenges are further heightened for parents who do not perceive themselves to be fully integrated into the society in which they are receiving care, e.g. the Traveller population.



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Traveller community

- Pop-30,987—5.5% Mid-West (60% < 25yrs)
- Poor education
- Poor literacy and socioeconomic deprivation
- High levels of unemployment and poverty.
- Distrust of institutions
- Poor compliance, engagement and attendance with health services



AITHS 2010

- Infant mortality of 14.1% *compared to 3.9% in the settled community.
- life expectancy for male Travellers is 15.1 years less than the general population, as 61.7 (remains similar to the life expectancy of the general population in 1945).
- Life expectancy for female Travellers is 11.5 years less than women in the settled population.
- 50% of Travellers have difficulty reading medical instructions.
- Traveller women are four times more likely to suffer from depression than settled women

*per 1000 live births

National Traveller Health Action Plan

June 2018



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- No new resources allocated to Traveller health since 2008,
- Perinatal health/mother and infant health (breastfeeding, maternity and child development; speech and language therapy)
- Domestic Violence
- Traveller Infant Mortality
- There is a need for a dedicated individual with exclusive responsibility for Traveller health within the DoH
- The NTHAP needs to work with current national policy (i.e.) Healthy Ireland, Connecting for Life, Infant and Health Well-Being (Nurture).



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- Culture and traditions influence people's health beliefs and it is important to recognise this as people's health beliefs influence their actions and behaviour regarding how they prevent ill health and how they maintain and promote health.

(Hogg and Holland 2010)



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Cultural sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity involves developing:

- An interpersonal relationship
- Partnership and empathy are integrated with
- Interpersonal communication skills which
- Convey Trust, Respect, Acceptance whilst
- Recognising potential barriers to culturally sensitive care



Significance of the Study

- Little literature on care experiences of parents in the neonatal setting from a cultural perspective (Hendson et al. 2015).
- Van Cleemput et al. (2007) less information concerning general views and perceptions of health and influences on the health of Gypsies and Irish Travellers.
- A search of the literature by the researcher found no evidence of research published on neonatal nurses/ midwives perspectives on providing culturally sensitive care to infants whose parents are members of the travelling community



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Aim of study

To explore nurses and midwives perspectives in a modern day Ireland on the provision of culturally sensitive care in a neonatal setting to infants born to parents from the traveller community



Objectives of Study

- To establish neonatal nurses and/or midwives experiences of providing culturally sensitive care to all cultures and then specifically to infants whose parents are members of the Traveller community.
- To determine nurses and /or midwives views on the significance of attending to cultural needs within a neonatal unit.
- To identify challenges and barriers encountered by neonatal nurses/ midwives when providing cultural sensitive care to infants born to parents of the Traveller community.
- To explore approaches utilised by neonatal nurses and/or midwives to enhance the quality of culturally sensitive care provided



Method

A descriptive qualitative approach was used.

Ten nurses/ midwives were interviewed from a neonatal unit in the Mid-West of Ireland following receipt of ethical approval.

Interview transcripts were analysed using Burnard's analysis framework (1991)

Four themes with associated subthemes were identified.



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Findings

Main themes identified:

- Barriers to breast-feeding for women from the Traveller Community.
- Rigidity in healthcare service.
- Lack of education among the Traveller population.
- Nurses and midwives concerns.



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Barriers to Breast feeding



Cultural Influence

'What we do notice with this group if you do explain the importance of breast milk they will do it but we know they will not continue it when they go home'.

'It doesn't matter how much education we give them and how much support because it is culturally frowned upon to breast feed'

'They have never seen it in their community, but it would be a positive thing if the breast feeding was more prevalent'



Significance of the Beutler Test

'We encourage breast feeding but Travellers aren't allowed do it until the Beutler comes back, even if they wanted to'.

'We are losing that window of opportunity because by the time you get the sample, send it away and get it back, it can often be up to four days

'I'd love to see a more real time response with regard to a test on site'.



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Nurses and Midwives Assumptions

'I suppose you automatically assume they are bottle feeding because with the Beutler test.....'

'It's important not to be judgemental or pass remarkable'

'I suppose you are making a negative assumption there. as opposed to someone with a known metabolic condition'



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Rigid Healthcare Service



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Visiting Policy

'People who have a premature baby do require additional family support'.

'The visiting policy is the big thing. It does cause bother between the staff and between the families'

'This baby is part of their extended family and they feel that they need to see the baby, to welcome the baby into the family'.



Lack of Support

'There is a lack of empowerment for women, they'd have limited financial control'

'If they decided to breast feed then they need to pump and who's going to pay for the pump?'

'They don't have the same support systems in place as other minority groups',



Religion

'Their religious beliefs are so strong that they think we are wrong and things might work out better for their very ill baby. I find that difficult'

'You can always put the relic in a sealed plastic bag'

'They always want holy medals or a glove touched by Padre Pio and such on the baby. We have to be sensitive to that'.



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Lack of Education among the Traveller Community



Poor Literacy

'Low literacy rates in adults makes it difficult for them to access the services they need'

. Giving them literature and some of them can't even read or write!!!!?

They would not be well educated or follow what is going on in the general media in terms of education and decisions you'd make in relation to your baby'



Health Promotion

'Because of the statistically known risks of infant morbidity and mortality there are groups you have to target education towards, immunisation programmes, hygiene for example'

'It's up to us to try to empower them as much as we can'

'Their first interaction with us might be their first interaction with the health service so we need to get it right'



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Trust

'Also there is a trust issue there from old'..

'When someone is different to you, they might not trust you as much as you'd like them to'

'Build a trust with them so they can have trust in you and trust the information you are giving them'



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Nurses/Midwives Concerns



Infant Discharge

'We are not sure where the Traveller baby is going home to and how long they will be there'.

'We are not sure of the future of that baby. It causes me moral distress'.

'How effective is our discharge advice on site when dealing with different groups not just Travellers'.



Domestic Violence

'Also we've noted from doing the charts that a lot of these women suffer from depression'

'There is a higher incidence of domestic violence in the Traveller group. Also alcohol is a problem with this group and in the last few years drugs too'

'I have come across this, the Traveller women will tell you but they have to keep it in the community'



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Staff Education

I do think there is huge gap in nursing in terms of education around culture and the Travelling community. Especially in the neonatal unit'

'A young 19 year old Traveller girl today is not the same as a 19yr old twenty years ago'

I've got one half day education in fifteen years on Traveller culture'



Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher believes that similar studies should be carried out in the area such as:

- Research on the perspectives of Traveller parents and on the perspectives of other health care professionals in relation to the provision of culturally sensitive care in the neonatal setting might be beneficial in helping to provide culturally sensitive care.
- The need for routine screening of all Travellers for Galactosaemia and/ or development of a more efficacious result from the Beutler test is an issue requiring further investigation.
- An increased focus on how to support neonatal nurses/midwives in supporting and motivating Traveller mothers to express breast milk whilst awaiting Beutler test results is required.
- Further investigation into the effects of a restrictive visiting policy in the neonatal setting is also recommended.



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Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that neonatal nurses and midwives do practice with a cultural awareness but there are challenges, particularly to do with beliefs and practices that are the norm within the Traveller community.

Barriers to breast feeding within the travelling community, the ***lack of flexibility*** within the healthcare service, ***lack of education*** of the Traveller population and ***nurses/midwives concerns*** all need to be addressed if we are to provide equality of care to all infants in the neonatal setting.

Particular focus is now needed on these points to ensure culturally sensitive care is provided for this population.



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Questions?
Thank you for your attention





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