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Research Week 2023

Strengthening community and support from NICU to home for Black and Latino families: A Community-Based Participatory Research Pilot

Tova Kruss, BS, Oluwadamilola Sosanya, BS, Zayna M. Bakizada, M.D., Julianna Mazziotti, BS, Devlynne Sasha Ondusko, MD

Medical Student at OHSU

Keywords

NICU, Postpartum Depression, Peer Support, Latino, Black

Abstract

Postpartum mood and anxiety disorders (PMAD), including postpartum depression, are more prevalent in parents of infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) than in the general population. Racial disparities exist in peripartum depression screening and treatment, and mental health resource access highlighting an area of need. Recent qualitative work amplifying the voices of marginalized families with an infant in the NICU identified culturally concordant family peer support groups as a method to mitigate NICU-related stressors. Our feasibility study evaluated attendance at racially and linguistically concordant NICU peer support groups. Monthly hybrid (virtual and in-person) sessions were held from August 2023 to January 2024. In total, 12 peer support groups were hosted, six sessions for Black families and six for Spanish language-preferred Latino families. Sessions averaged 81 minutes. In total, 28 participants attended the Black/African American sessions, and 33 participants attended the Spanish language preferred sessions (range of 2 to 6 participants per session). Of participants, 58.3% formerly had an infant in the NICU and 41.7% had an infant in the NICU at the time of the session. Of attendees, 17.3% identified as fathers and 82.7% as mothers. Virtual attendance accounted for 55.3%. Sessions were confidential, participant-led, and facilitated by racially and linguistically concordant community organization members and mental health providers. Attendance, participant family role, and session characteristics were collected, and descriptive statistics were performed. In the present study, attendance of family with an infant currently or formerly hospitalized in the NICU occurred at every peer support session, both in the Black/African American and Spanish language-preferred Latino groups. Virtual attendance accounted for 55.3% of overall attendance demonstrating the value of hybrid options for equitable participation. Next steps include qualitative evaluation of parental stress, anxiety, sense of belonging, and satisfaction with group structure through surveys and individual family interviews.