



Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Caregiver Education and Family-Centered Care

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DCE Site Description

- **Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach (MCWHLB)** is a non-profit hospital that provides direct patient services to children and families. They offer a range of inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation therapy services
- Mission: "To improve the health and well-being of individuals, families and our communities." (MCWHLB, 2025)

Summary of Needs Assessment

- Caregiver education resources based on and aligned with NICU infant's developmental stage
- Digital resource library of multimedia materials to support bedside education by NICU therapists
- Consistent education from therapists to caregivers, addressing caregivers diverse health literacy needs

Learning Objectives

Primary Focus: Program Development

- Develop a detailed plan for a caregiver education program to promote caregiver knowledge and increase family-centered care in the NICU
- Create and modify five multimedia caregiver education resources to enhance knowledge and promote family-centered care for NICU infants at different developmental stages
- Demonstrate interprofessional skills through multidisciplinary observations with occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), and speech-language pathology (SLP), and present an in-service to the NICU rehabilitation team

Literature Review

Themes

- NICU caregivers experience higher stress, anxiety, and uncertainty in their roles compared to those caring for infants outside of the NICU (Bater et al., 2024; Edney & McHugh, 2013; Monaghan et al., 2020; Toivonen et al., 2020;)
- NICU caregivers seek additional information online for their infant's care, but resource reliability is a concern. (Gehl et al., 2020)
- Support from therapists and healthcare providers boosts confidence and empowerment. Caregivers value consistency, preferring the same providers and instructions. (Edney & McHugh, 2013, Treyvaud et al., 2019)

Gap: Male caregivers are less likely to share their experiences in the NICU compared to female caregivers.

Discussion / Implications

NICU caregivers want to be actively involved in their infant's care, but due to their infant's need for specialized care or fear, they may be uncertain about how to engage and participate

NICU infants endure many stressful and unpleasant events, making it essential to educate caregivers on how to create positive experiences that support their infants' growth and development

Implications

- Greater need for easily accesable caregiver education resouces to meet the ongoing needs of NICU caregivers to support their caregiving roles and promote family-cenetered care which can be supported by OT.
- Nursing staff must follow OT and NICU therapists' recommendations to avoid disrupting the infant's health and development, as well as to prevent regression in progress and setbacks in the advancements made through NICU therapies. Altering orders without first consulting a NICU therapist can disrupt the infant's health trajectory, leading to health issues later in life.

Project Description

Program: NICU Caregiver Education Program

- Designed and implemented a NICU caregiver education program to enhance caregiver knowledge and support education provided at bedside by NICU rehabilitation therapist
- Collected quantitative data from NICU therapists to assess levels of satisfaction with caregiver education resources and qualitative data from caregivers to ensure the program met their educational needs and preferences
- Conducted independent research and collaborated with an interdisciplinary team to develop an evidence-based NICU caregiver education program
- Conducted independent research and multidisciplinary observations to understand the roles of OT, PT, and SLP in NICU care

NICU Caregiver Education Program Topics:

- Oral immune therapy
- Non-nutritive breastfeeding
- Infant massage
- Feeding readiness scores
- Flow rates, bottles, and nipples
- Specialized cleft feeding
- Feeding strategies

Summary of Deliverables

NICU Caregiver Education Program deliverables and resources will be property of both MCWHLB and the occupational therapy doctoral capstone student

Acknowledgments

A heartfelt thank you to my family, friends, professors, clinical instructors, capstone mentors, and the Miller Children's & Women's Hospital NICU rehab team for their unwavering support and guidance throughout my occupational therapy journey, both professionally and personally. Through every step of the way, you have all believed in me and supported me in many ways that I will always cherish and be grateful for.

references available upon request

Project Outcomes

Quantitative Data

I believe the caregiver education resources support both caregivers and nursing staff by helping them understand key topics and the role of therapy in NICU care. This understanding will facilitate learning carryover and contribute to progress in the infant's therapy goals.

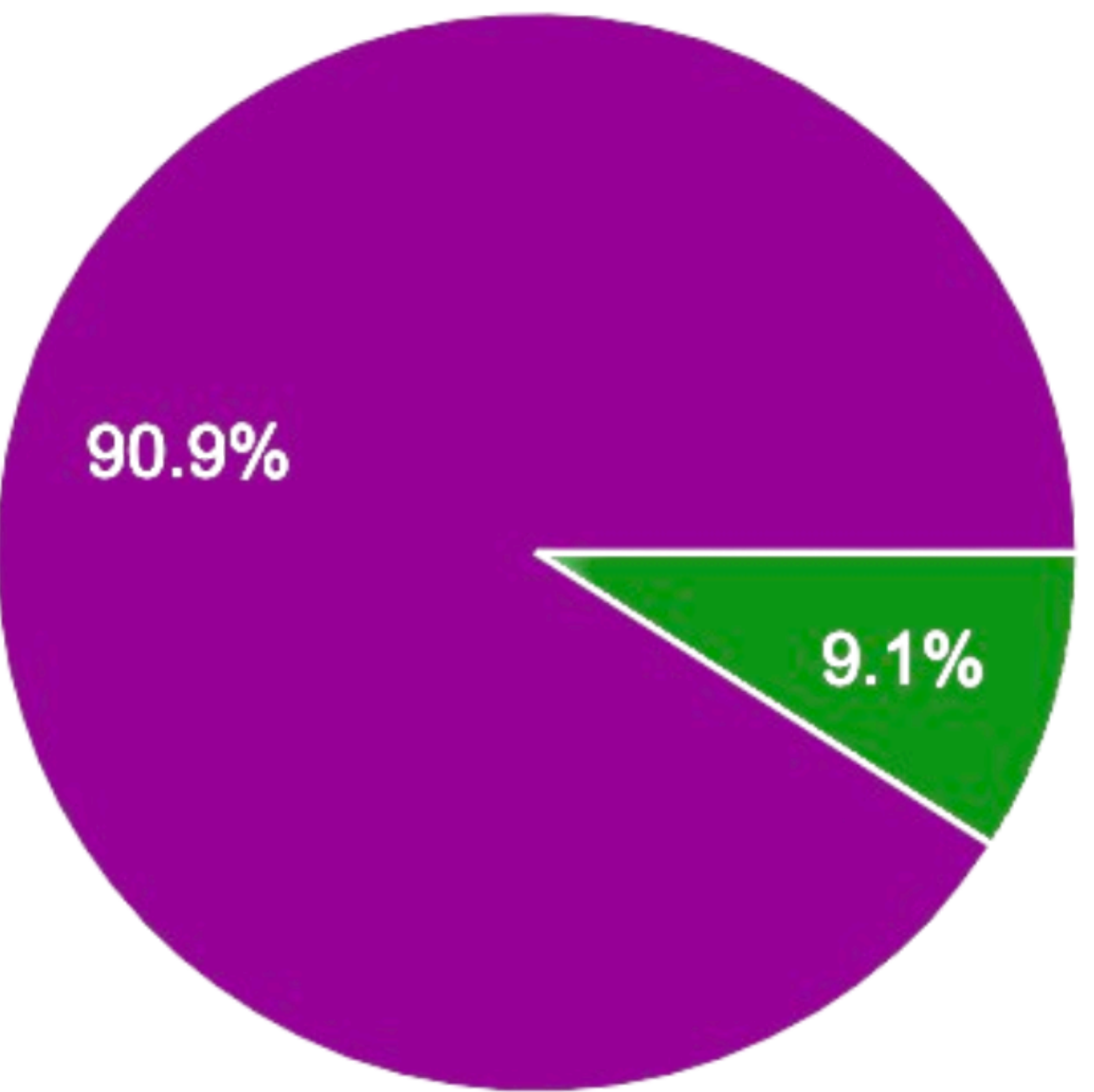


Figure 1. Impact of Caregiver Education Resources on Enhancing Caregiver and Nursing Staff Understanding of Key Topics and Therapy Roles in NICU Care

I believe the resources created will encourage caregiver engagement and support family-centered care in the NICU.

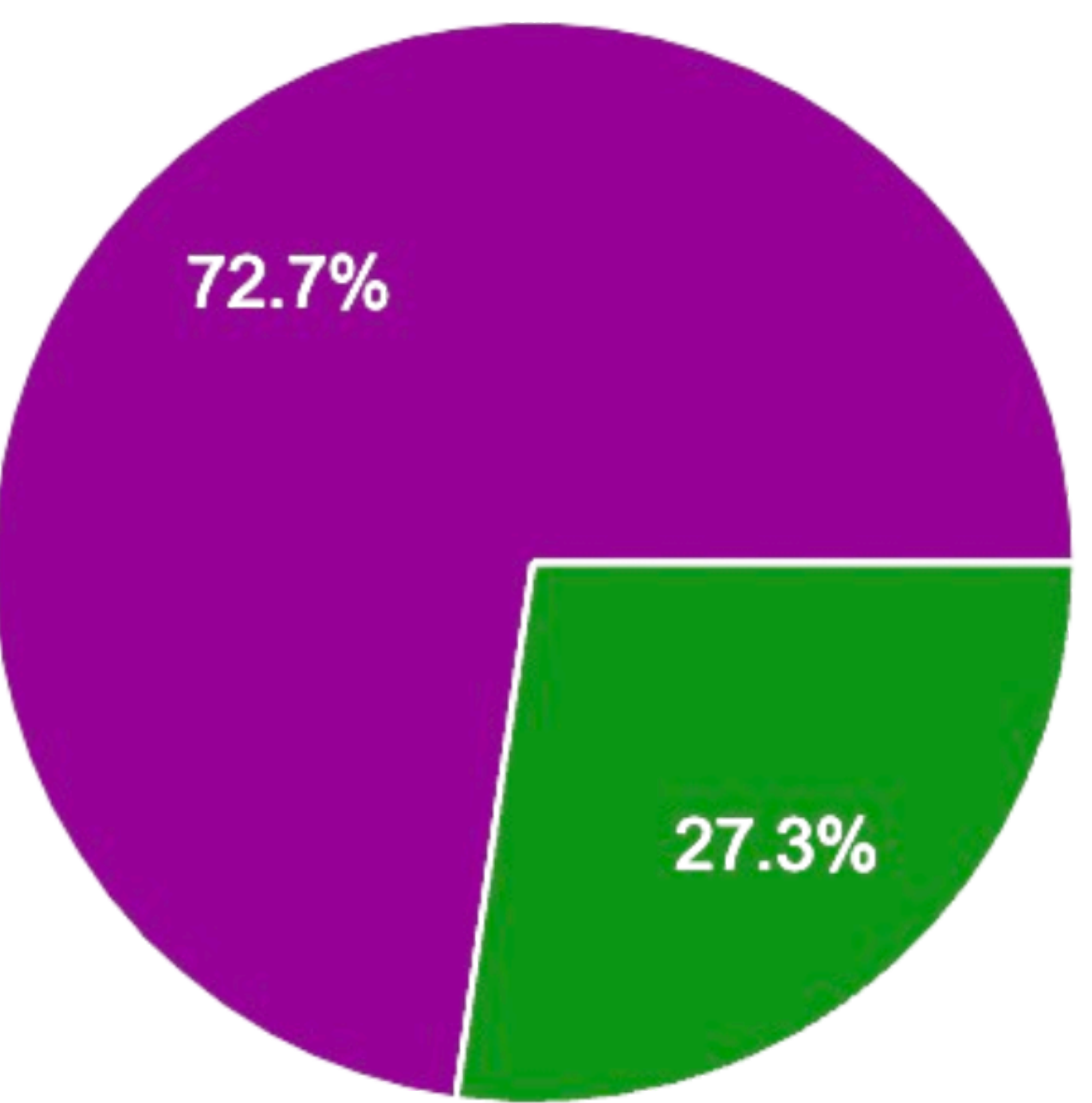


Figure 2. Impact of Resources on Caregiver Engagement and Family-Centered Care in the NICU

1 - Strongly Disagree 2 - Disagree 3 - Neither Agree or Disagree 4 - Agree 5 - Strongly Agree

Qualitative Data

Guidance for Active NICU Caregiving

"I woud like more "how to videos" (instructional videos) so I can do the stuff they do in therapy with my baby when the therapist isn't here or if they don't see them on this day"

Accessible Resouces for Caregivers

"I'd like something that I can access or read from my phone so that when I'm here I can look at it while I hold, or something I can pull up on my phone and show my partner if they're not able to come here"

Consistent Educational Resources

"Different formats can help with confusion and misinterpretation, especially when I get instructions from the nurse one way that's different from the OT. A handout I may not visualize or know what it's saying, but if it's a video, I can watch it, play it back, then do it myself."