

## The Global Perspective – NZ's Pilot Project to support Neonatal Nursing Education in Developing Countries

By Wendy Hines

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According to COINN, of the 130 million babies born annually globally, about 4 million will die in the first 4 weeks of life-the neonatal period. The majority of these deaths are attributable to preventable conditions such as prematurity, asphyxia, and infections. If these problems are not caught early enough, the babies will require emergency care and may suffer long-term consequences requiring costly treatment and diminish their capacity to work.

A key issue identified in many developing countries is that neonatal nursing is not recognised as a speciality, therefore specific education and skills have not been developed. This gap in education has also been attributed to the mortality rate in the first few hours of an infant's life, due to lack of training and expertise available.

Two of COINN's recommendations are being used as goals for a pilot project by New Zealand (NZ) Neonatal Nurses College Aotearoa (NNCA):

1. COINN is committed to the promotion of positive health outcomes for neonates (such as decreasing mortality and morbidity) and creating a global community of specialized nurses working together towards this goal.
2. COINN supports the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially #4 to reduce the mortality rate of children less than five years of age.

Following discussion and input from personal experiences, NNCA decided to support this pilot project. The overall goal is to develop a teaching template that can be utilised to guide individuals or groups who are in a position to provide support and education to neonatal nurses in developing countries.

Samoa, a developing island nation in the Pacific and a neighbour to NZ, has an infant mortality rate four times greater than NZ's. There is a strong belief amongst NNCA members that they are in a privileged position to help reduce this rate and help meet Millennium goal #4. The proposal for financial support from NNCA was presented and voted in favour at the AGM last year in Christchurch.

The site visit occurred recently. Wendy Hines, NNCA Executive Committee Member and Anevili Purcell, Staff Nurse, Middlemore NICU, travelled to Samoa in June to establish relationships and gain information to make recommendations for the Pacific Project Group to work with. They met with key personnel to understand the health system, and with some trial and error they met the right people!

The working group met in late August to analyse the data collected from the site visit. The response from the nursing staff in Samoa was overwhelmingly positive and helped identify 5 topics to design the self-learning packages. A key champion was identified and an invitation has been made to that person to attend the Neonatal Conference in New Zealand. This time will also be used to visit neonatal units and coach her to deliver the self-learning packages, promoting the concept of 'train the trainer'.

The site visit also identified an existing working relationship between Samoa's National Health Service and Counties Manakau, NZ. Their representative is excited about NNCA's Project Charter and the two parties plan to join resources for the delivery and continuity of the education.

Where to from here? Following the Neonatal Conference in Late October and spending time with the Key champion nurse, the self-learning packages will be sent to the nursing staff in Samoa. It is envisaged that two more NZ nurses will make a visit to Samoa to spend a week delivering education to support those learning packages and support the Key Champion. A formal evaluation of the pilot project will then be conducted and a template formulated for any group to use.

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References:

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