Abstract

BACKGROUND: Many international studies in the field of neonatal nursing have identified parental stress, coping difficulties, support issues, and various other experiences that are related to the birth of a preterm infant. However, no studies have assessed the interrelated issues of parental stress, social support, satisfaction, and nursing support in neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) in Jordan.

PURPOSE: This study describes the lived experiences, needs in relation to care, and support systems of parents whose neonates were admitted to the NICU.

METHODS: A qualitative design using a phenomenological approach was used to explore the experiences of Jordanian parents who gave birth to neonates in the NICU setting. Participants were recruited from the NICUs of government, teaching, and private hospitals. Data were collected using semistructured interviews that were conducted with parents in a suitable place. Ten participants were interviewed: eight mothers and two fathers. After interviews were transcribed, the methodology suggested by van Manen (1990) was used to analyze the data.

RESULTS: The shock, worry, and anxiety experienced by parents; the influences of NICU admission on the experiences of parents and families; the information and assistance required and received by parents from healthcare professionals; and the emotions and satisfaction of parents were the main themes that emerged from the study to reflect the lived experience of parents of neonates in the NICU.

CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: The parents in this study were satisfied with the healthcare process in the NICUs, even when this care did not fulfill their expectations or needs for their infants. Nurses in the NICUs must develop interventions and strategies that minimize the stress experienced by parents and that support the emotional capacity of parents to deal with this stressful situation.

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