



WHITE PAPER



Enhancing Patient and Family Engagement through Virtual Care Solutions

Research shows that better parental engagement improves outcomes and the care experience.

The birth of a newborn is an exciting event for parents and families. But when the infant needs the specialized care of a NICU, that excitement quickly becomes entangled with anxiety, depression, and fear of the unknown.¹ These emotions, while completely normal, can negatively impact “cognitive, behavioral, and psychomotor development” of the child.²

Even with the excellent, passionate care of NICU doctors and nurses, families of these fragile newborns can experience a sense of helplessness and separation. They want to know what is going on with their child at every moment, and they want—and need—to be engaged as part of the care team. Doing so will give parents a voice and a sense of control in an overwhelming situation.

Parental engagement also improves post-discharge confidence and care plan adherence.³ When supported by ongoing parent education, the transition from hospital to home becomes a much smoother transition, which helps further improve outcomes.

“Leaders who want to ensure that patients and family members in the NICU perceive care in a positive manner must ensure effective ongoing, and bilateral communication takes place.”⁵

There is no single framework for improving parental engagement in the NICU because each hospital's range of services and capabilities differ. But they do all face the same set of challenges that need to be overcome to achieve an optimal level of engagement.

According to a survey of NICU leaders, engaging family members requires communication that flows in all directions across all channels. The survey states: “While simple in concept, many organizations struggle with prioritizing communication in the absence of a culture that rewards it.”⁶ As part of that culture, leadership must commit the resources to break down barriers that get in the way of these efforts.

BENEFIT OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE NICU⁴

- Reduced length of stay
- Decreased readmissions
- Improved outcomes

BARRIERS TO PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Care in the NICU is highly complex and can cause parents to feel separated from their infant, even when they are in the room. Life-saving equipment can inhibit a full view of their infant or may preclude them from holding and bonding with the child. This sense of separation and helplessness grows as time passes. Since a stay for an infant in the NICU can run from a few days to several months, physical separation becomes a significant barrier to engagement. Whether parents live a long distance from the hospital or they just have to get back to jobs, and other family obligations, work in recent visitation restrictions due to infectious disease, their ability to visit can be limited. Engaging becomes more difficult, which makes getting information more challenging. Parents may call into the NICU multiple times a day for status updates. In other cases, they may have a friend or relative go to the hospital to try to catch the infant's provider. Parents end up getting secondhand information that could have been misunderstood and inaccurate. This can result in confusion, frustration, and even greater stress.

Another barrier to engagement comes from the number of providers caring for the infant. Typically, an infant in the NICU may be treated or seen by multiple specialists at a variety of times throughout the stay. It may be impossible for parents to talk with each one on a regular basis. Depending on how the specialists manage information, NICU staff may have to comb through paper charts or notes in an electronic health record to get the latest information.

Changes can occur quickly in the NICU, which makes parental engagement critical, especially when decisions need to be made. Getting the right information to the parent at the right time and in a way they can understand is essential to creating a positive parent experience and achieving optimal outcomes.

DEVELOPING A FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The first step for hospitals wanting to improve parent and family engagement in the NICU is to understand their current situation, especially the organization's culture. Does leadership support and promote a culture of collaboration and communication with families? Is this support backed by the resources necessary to maintain a high level of effectiveness? How does leadership define the parent experience in the NICU? Are the parent experience and gathering feedback leading drivers for quality improvement?

When parents are asked to rank the top elements of a positive parent experience, they put listening at the top of the list, followed by communicating clearly, being treated with courtesy and respect, and providing a clear care plan.

Following are two proven strategies hospitals can leverage to drive a better parent experience in the NICU and improve engagement of parents and families.

THE POWER OF CLINICAL COMMUNICATION TOOLS

According to a survey conducted by the Beryl Institute, NICU leaders suggest regularly communication with staff and parents to get feedback on the child's care. This can be especially beneficial when done just prior to the infant's discharge.

It is not always possible for parents and families to be present when their physician(s) are treating their critical infant. When this is the case, HIPAA-compliant clinical communication tools can provide the same benefit. These tools enable clinicians to capture video during rounds and share it with parents in real-time. When real-time sharing isn't possible, videos and pictures can be stored and shared at a later time. Clinicians can send push notifications to parents when a new video or picture is available for viewing.

"When we recognize the human equation at the heart of healthcare calls for clear, effective communication and purposeful relationships and a commitment to quality and safety, then we are truly doing the real and right work of healthcare."

JASON A. WOLF, PH.D., CPXP,
President & CEO of The Beryl Institute

Engaging parents through virtual access allows providers to treat parents as an essential part of the care team. It also helps improve parental trust for the provider and care team when they see firsthand that the care plan communicated is being followed. And when status or plans change, parents can be updated in real-time.



BEDSIDE CAMERAS

Engaging parents and families goes beyond the hospital walls. When parents have transitioned back to their daily responsibilities, bedside cameras can keep them connected with their infants. These cameras allow parents and families to see their infant at any time. This does more than just relieve anxiety. According to Dr. Bernice Duesler, Neonatal Attending at Holy Redeemer Hospital, when moms view their infant via a bedside camera while they're pumping, it helps enhance the emotional connection and induce milk production.¹⁰

PROVEN RESULTS

AngelEye Health is a leading provider of virtual engagement solutions that remove the physical barriers that separate children from their parents and families.



3,319
Cameras Installed



74,948
FAMILY MEMBERS
signed up!



**Families viewed their
babies for a total of:
327,278 HOURS**



125+ NICUs

With AngelEye Health, parents and extended family can view the infant anytime, anywhere from any device that has an internet connection, including smartphones, PCs, and tablets. The solution also enables more streamlined communications and better engagement between the provider and the parents. The multilingual solutions allow parents to:

- View newborn(s) in real-time
- Get care updates and memorable moments with text, video and photo updates real-time text

HERE'S WHAT CLINICIANS AND PARENTS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT ANGELEYE HEALTH

"The AngelEye system has been such a dramatic asset to us in our NICU. It's always fun to put little notes. The other day a mom couldn't come in because she was graduating from graduate school, and we put a little note for the camera. 'Congratulations, Mom. I'm proud of you.' And she was so thrilled to see that when she came in, and it was just really exciting for her that the baby became part of her special day."

DOLLY VERDON

Holy Redeemer Hospital



"It's hard to believe that I'm looking at my daughter from 7,000 miles away in Kuwait, just watching her moving. It can't get any better. I absolutely love it."

SGT. SAM LAST PARENT,

Kansas University Medical Center

"The AngelEye application absolutely, no doubt, supports a more patient-centric hospital environment. Parents love the connection with their baby and being able to invite friends and family to see the baby too, even from long distances."

BETH EPSTEIN

PH.D., Rn, Hcec-C, Associate Professor & Chair, Department of Acute and Specialty Care, University of Virginia Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (Chop) School of Nursing; Associate Professor, Center for Biomedical Ethics and Humanities, University of Virginia

DELIVERING PEACE OF MIND

Having a child in the NICU is an experience no parent would hope for. But when it happens, hospitals can help reduce stress on both the neonate and the parents by incorporating technologies that improve communication and enable better parent-child bonding. The result is better outcomes, an enhanced parent experience, and a better reputation in the community.

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ANGELEYE HEALTH'S FAMILY
ENGAGEMENT SOLUTIONS?**

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