

## **Title: Internet access for families on the high risk antenatal obstetrical unit.**

### **MAP PHASE: Preadmission**

**PBP:** Familiarize the family with the NICU environment, unit care philosophies, and team AND provide access to a variety of resource material regarding conditions discussed AND Provide options for the NICU staff and experienced families to support the family

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### **Case Study:**

Newly admitted families to the high risk antenatal obstetrical unit at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre participate in a discussion with a neonatologist regarding the potential admission of their infant to the NICU. Follow up discussions are not planned unless requested by the family. After the discussion, families often have difficulty recollecting some of the details discussed or have further questions about potential medical conditions but do not request an additional discussion with the neonatologist or other NICU staff. Mothers also feel a sense of isolation from their friends and family as the only means of communication is the telephone. This becomes an expensive method of communication for our families who are not from the Toronto area. In addition, mothers on bed rest are not able to tour the NICU nor can they see the inspirational story boards created by experienced NICU families that are posted in the hall outside the NICU.

Recently our hospital made it possible for our mothers on the antenatal floor to obtain wireless internet access at their bedside. This capability has allowed the families to log onto the internet to access our NICU website which contains a virtual tour of the unit and other information about the NICU and medical conditions experienced by infants admitted to the unit. Wireless internet at the bedside also allows mothers to communicate via email with friends/family, and reduce their sense of isolation.

We surveyed mothers who have used this service and all agree that it has very much helped them feel less isolated and better informed. Unfortunately at present, families must provide their own laptop computers. This renders this technology unavailable to some families. In the future, we hope to have laptops at each bedside so the service can be made available to all families admitted to the high risk antenatal obstetrical unit.

