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David J R Hutchon

Darlington Memorial Hospital, UK

The role of mother's and father's voice and touch in improving neonatal transition at birth

Transition from placental respiration to pulmonary respiration at birth is one of the most radical changes in both the circulation and the pulmonary function, changes which have to occur within a few minutes after birth if the baby is to survive intact. It is the moment when the mother can see, touch and speak directly to their newborn for the first time. The neonate can recognize the voice of its mother (and father) and these voices have an immediate calming effect. The maternal voice has been shown to be recognized by the newborn baby having heard it *in utero* during the months before. Even before birth, processing of the maternal voice is apparent within the temporal cortex of the foetus. After birth, it is no surprise that the mother's voice can quickly calm a crying baby. The father's voice can also be recognized if the foetus has been exposed sufficiently during pregnancy. Emotional closeness through vocalization and touch are important in the future parent-infant relationship and may have beneficial effects on the recovery of the neonate. Nothing can be more reassuring than the mother's voice. When the neonate is born asphyxiated, ventilation is a priority. This is carried out away from the mother, but mother side resuscitation, as opposed to the traditional room side resuscitation, allows the mother to speak to and touch her newborn baby and aid the recovery. Equipment is now available to allow this approach. With the neonate by the mother the placental circulation can remain intact.

Biography

David J R Hutchon is an Emeritus Consultant Obstetrician at the Darlington Memorial Hospital after 35 years of clinical practice. He has spent the last 10 years studying and teaching the circulatory changes which occur at birth and the importance of the residual placental circulation. He has published more than 20 papers on the subject and is an Editorial Board Member of the *Maternal Health, Neonatology and Perinatology* journal. He led the team which has resulted in the production of the LifeStart, a mobile neonatal resuscitation trolley, now being used in a number of units in the UK, Europe and the USA.

djrhutchon@hotmail.co.uk

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