Where Did All the Teddy Bears Go?
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Problem: Nosocomial infections are of particular concern in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). They remain one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in neonates.

Evidence: It is recognized that nosocomial infections originate from hands and medical equipment. Recent literature suggests that soft toys are also a reservoir of potential pathogens.

Strategy: A literature search was conducted to determine the relationship between nosocomial infections and soft toys. Twenty-nine NICUs (28 magnet, 1 seeking magnet) were contacted to ascertain their policy on soft toys presence in the NICU. Our policy was then changed to restrict soft toys from the NICU. Based on this evidence and policy change, a pre-count, post-count evidence-based project was conducted to evaluate the presence of soft toys within the NICU.

Practice Change: Soft toys will be restricted from the NICU.

Evaluation: A pre-count of soft toys was conducted by visual inspection of individual neonates’ cribs. Education on the relationship of nosocomial infections and soft toys was presented in the weekly meeting of the NICU parents’ group. A poster board was developed to educate neonatal nurses on the results from the literature search, other NICUs’ policies on soft toys, and pathogens commonly found on soft toys. This poster board was placed in the NICU breakroom for frontline nurses. An update on the policy change was delivered to the nurses via email. After two weeks, a post-count was conducted in the same manner as previously described.

Results: The pre-count revealed 19 soft toys in the NICU. After the education initiative, only two soft toys were present in the post-count. Both toys were subsequently removed from the neonates’ cribs.

Recommendations: Soft toys continue to be restricted from the NICU. Parents need continuing education on the importance of infection control practice, including the restriction of soft toys.

Lessons Learned: When implementing change in the NICU, both nurses and parents need to be educated on the change.

Bibliography:
