Reviewer's report

Title: 'Being in a womb' or 'playing musical chairs': the impact of place and space on infant feeding in NICUs

Version: 1 Date: 11 April 2013

Reviewer: Beverly Rossman

Reviewer's report:

Overall this is a very well-written article on a fascinating topic. The topic is also very timely as many NICUs, particularly in the United States, are undergoing renovation. The abstract is clear and precise. I really enjoyed reading this article and my suggestions are intended to help the authors make their article more comprehensive.

Discretionary Revisions:

1) I would like more information on the similarities/differences in the NICUs. Perhaps a Table depicting this might be the best format. Some of the information I would like to know would be: size of each NICU, breastfeeding rates at each NICU, standard breastfeeding practices in each (you alluded to the different “breastfeeding cultures” in the strengths and limitations section), whether mothers had access to IBCLCs, group breastfeeding classes, peer counselors (i.e., what made the BF cultures different among the NICUs).

2) Overall the analysis is clear and sound and the authors adhere to appropriate qualitative standards of rigor. One question I have is whether the theoretical coding was conducted independently by both authors and then discussed to reach a consensus (thus increasing rigor through inter-rater reliability) or whether it was conducted jointly.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1) Could you please explain what a “moderate” level of participant observation was?

2) I am not familiar with Spradley’s nine-dimension framework for data collection and many other readers also may not be. Could you please explain it briefly?

3) I am confused about the discussion of the Womb. In the Methods setting section, during the intensive care phase in NICU A, parents are described as staying in a bed next to their infant’s incubator in a room shared with up to 3 other babies/families. After their baby no longer needs ventilation, the family is transferred to a private room. However, in your description of the Womb, the infant and parents are placed in a private room immediately after birth. Implicit in the statement is that this is regardless of the infant’s level of care (i.e. whether the infant needs mechanical ventilation or not). There seems to be a discrepancy then in the 2 descriptions. Can you please clarify this for me and for other readers? If the infant has to be off ventilation and out of critical care to be in the...
Womb, then I had difficulty differentiating the Womb and Hotel Room other than some homey touches and the fact that parents MAY have to share a room with someone in the Hotel room, although that was not touched on in the discussion at all. Could you please rewrite to make the Womb and Hotel Room more distinct from each other?

Minor Essential Revisions
1) There are a few punctuation errors, mostly misplaced commas, throughout the manuscript that need to be attended to.
2) One word change: In The hotel room section, first paragraph, line 11 - currently reads “..in NICU B and C there were less rooms…” The corrected word should be “fewer” rooms instead of “less” rooms. Just a grammatical error.
3) I am a bit confused about the observations/interviews towards the end of the Data Collection section. The sentence beginning “In Sweden, 108 hours of observation…” and the next sentence “In England, 102 hours of observation….” are unclear. Please clarify if these were conducted with staff.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests