

DFE Application: Supervisors: Dr Breidge Boyle, Dr Jenny McNeill and Dr Derek McLaughlin.
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Title: **EMDR to minimise the development of PTSD on the NICU: a feasibility study**

Background

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) is a very stressful environment where up to 70% of parents may develop post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In a current study we are estimating the prevalence of PTSD in parents of infants requiring care in the neonatal units in Northern Ireland and trialing Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) as a “rescue” therapy in those who show symptoms. The World Health Organisation increasingly advocate using EMDR as a “first aid” rather than a rescue treatment, designed to prevent the development of PTSD in stressful situations.

Aim

To design an EMDR based intervention for parents whose infants are admitted to NICU and test the feasibility of using it on parents in a single NICU in Northern Ireland.

Methods

A sequential mixed methods study, where the feasibility of using a simple EMDR based intervention with parents whose baby is likely to be on NICU for more than one month. Pre and post testing for PTSD will be carried out. A qualitative evaluation of the acceptability of the intervention will follow.

Phase 1

The student, an EMDR practitioner, will design a simple, evidence based EMDR intervention to use with parents while their infant is being treated on NICU.

Phase 2

Using validated tools to quantify their symptoms before and after, to implement the intervention on a sample of approximately 20 - 30 parents (Mothers and fathers) on a single NICU. Participants will be retested for PTSD on discharge and again when they have been home for 4-6 weeks.

Phase 3

Semi structured interviews will be carried out to explore the experience of receiving EMDR as a participant. Focus groups will be held with staff to explore the acceptability of this therapy on the units and how the intervention can be used in the future.