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The PAIDOS/Department of Health Policy Neonatal Fellowship in Outcomes Research

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The PAIDOS/Department of Health Policy Neonatal Fellowship in Outcomes Research

As disease management strategies proliferate, the need for enhancing clinical training by incorporating exposure to outcomes research is an idea with increasing appeal in many areas of medicine. This trend is evident in the field of neonatology. A subspecialty of pediatrics, neonatology has been invested in the recent past in technological advances, leading to greatly increased survival rates of these preterm infants. Despite these strides, the incidence of preterm infants has not declined. Moreover, advances in infertility therapies have been responsible for a rise in their numbers. With increasing numbers of survivors comes increasing responsibility regarding the burdens of these infants on society.

The study of infants cared for in a neonatal intensive care unit represents an underdeveloped arena of health services research (of which outcomes research is a facet) that is long overdue. Neonatology, like other areas in Pediatrics, lags behind other fields of medicine in the measurement of outcomes. This is in large part due to the lack of a comprehensive, nationally representative database (the researcher's "goldmine") that is independently audited. In contrast is an adult population of patients for whom Medicare has gathered extensive and comprehensive data. In an effort to further health services research in neonatal intensive care, the Department of Health Policy, in collaboration with the Division of Neonatology at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, and PAIDOS Health Management Services, Inc. (PHMS), established the PAIDOS/Department of Health Policy Pediatrics Fellowship in Outcomes Research this past fall. PHMS, a nationwide multi-center provider of neonatal case management, enlisted Jefferson to analyze its clinical and utilization database, and to develop and conduct outcomes research. It was decided that a fellowship would be the best structure in which to accomplish this goal. Suzanne M. Touch, MD, a fellow in Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine in the Division of Neonatology of TJUH, is spending the current year serving as a fellow in outcomes research with the Department of Health Policy. Suzanne is a graduate of Jefferson Medical College and completed a pediatric residency at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. She is spearheading the research efforts of the neonatal team, in collaboration with Jay Greenspan, MD, Director of Neonatology and Professor of Pediatrics at Jefferson Medical College, and Michael Kornhauser, MD, Regional Medical Director of PHMS and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Jefferson Medical College.

Initial investigation has demonstrated marked variability in management practice and outcomes both within and between regions nationwide. Further study is being directed at determining sources of this variability.

About the Author

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