B1-10: Interviewing Parents about Sensitive Topics

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Abstract:

Introduction: While much has been written about how parents make medical decisions for critically ill infants, little research has prospectively examined this process throughout the life-threatening illness. A key method to explore this sensitive topic is qualitative interviewing. However, the use of such an intensive data collection method during highly emotive times is challenging because of the potential for increased parental burden and invasion of privacy. This study explored the issues involved in the use of qualitative interviewing with parents making decisions about their infants’ life-threatening events and the impact of this method on parents.

Research questions: 1) Are parents willing to participate in research when their infant is critically ill? 2) What are the effects of being interviewed about parental decision-making for a critically ill infant?

Method(s): Parents were recruited from intensive care and bone marrow transplant units at a tertiary hospital. Sixteen parents of 10 infants participated in narrative-style interviews. Analysis also included the content of field notes taken immediately following the interviews, which detailed parents’ emotional state and mood. The interviews and fields notes were analyzed using content analysis to develop themes.

Results: Ten of 14 families recruited participated during the study period. Parents completed 1-12 interviews throughout the study period (mean=4). Parents did not feel that the questions asked during the interviews were too painful or difficult to answer. Some parents felt the interviews
allowed them to focus on the positive aspects of their infant’s life and found benefit in sharing their experience. The time commitment was not felt to be burdensome and parents felt comfortable telling the research team when they were unable to participate in a scheduled interview. During the interviews, parents were described most often as calm, cooperative, relaxed, and positive. Three parents became teary during the interviews. No parents experienced intense distress.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** These results indicate that parents are willing to participate in research when their infants are critically ill and do not appear to experience undue distress when interviewed about sensitive topics.

**Abstract History:**
This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

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