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Influence of infant massage on the development and function of term small for gestational age infants at discharge from hospital and follow up in the home setting.

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It was found in studies that infants born at term with low weight - Small for Gestational Age (SGA) may have developmental difficulties, influencing performance in areas of occupation during the course of their life.

Many studies found extensive advantages in infant massage, such as: Promoting growth and development, decreasing irritability, and promoting the attachment process and interaction between the infant and his parent.

This study presents an intervention method provided by an occupational therapist, instructing parents in infant massage and integrating, in addition to the massaging technique, elements of support, promoting attachment, and assisting in efficient parental competency.

The aim of this study was to examine the influence of infant massage on the development and function of Term SGA infants, emphasizing characteristics of daily behaviors, motor functioning and sensory modulation.

Infants at the age of one month, were sampled by means of a matching design, and were randomly divided into research and control groups. The behavior characteristics, the sensory modulation and the motor function were evaluated. All tools were standard, reliable and valid.

The massage technique is based on principles of International Association of Infant Massage. The massage is given in a gentle, slow to medium manner and composed of deep and light pressure.

Participants were evaluated twice, before and after intervention. The study group participated in massage instruction meetings and continued daily massage implementation. The control group was evaluated and were given no intervention.

The results showed that profile of infants who were SGA at term had increased sensory modulation and motor functions compared to controls.

In the study group the infants' parents reported better improvement considering the ability to predict sensations and needs in comparison to the control group at the age of four months.

Significant improvement was found in the infant's sensory modulation in the study group in comparison with the control group.

The study's results strengthen the assumption that infant massage contributes to infant's development and function. In addition the study's results strengthen previous studies which found that infant massage contribute to the attachment process and to positive interaction between the parent and the infant.