"CONSENSUS ON AN INFANT MASSAGE PROGRAMME FOR HIGH RISK INFANTS FROM RESOURCE CONSTRAINED CONTEXTS: A DELPHI STUDY WITH PHYSIOTHERAPISTS AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS"

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Background and aim: Infants who are born high risk from resource constrained contexts present with a variety of contextual strains such as the reason for and effects of being born high risk, the limited knowledge of the primary caregiver on how to stimulate the infant as well as the social constrains and limited access to therapy often impact on the dyad's bonding and attachment process. Infant massage is a technique which has many documented benefits for infants especially on this process and although there are various programmes which have been designed for infants born without complications there are limited options available for caregivers with high risk infants from this context. The aim of this study was to develop a caregiver-initiated infant massage programme for high risk infants from this context towards assisting this dyad in the bonding and attachment process.

Method: A Delphi study was conducted over a three round process with a concluding number of eight Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists with experience in the field of high risk babies in a resource constrained context. The first survey was designed based on literature and the subsequent two surveys were designed based on the data and comments generated from previous surveys. Iteration of results was provided prior to the round three survey.

Results: Following completion of the Delphi process there was a consensus on 19 massage strokes to be included in this programme as well as the considerations for implementation with this population.

Conclusion: Through this study an infant massage programme for this population was developed with the inclusion of considerations for this dyad's social and medical context.