

2023-2024 ROVINSKY FAMILY LECTURESHIP SERIES

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 | 12:00 – 1:00 PM ET | Live Webinar

UNDERSTANDING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE OF NICU PARENTS AND SUPPORTING NICU PROVIDERS

Alexa Bonacquisti, PhD, PMH-C

Assistant Professor, PsyD Program in Clinical Psychology; School of Professional and Applied Psychology; Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

This presentation will describe common psychological reactions and symptoms among parents of infants hospitalized in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). The presentation will provide an overview of evidence-based screening tools and psychological interventions that can be offered within the NICU to support parents. The presentation will also address burnout and compassion fatigue among NICU providers and discuss how providers might best interact with parents from a psychologically aware perspective to improve clinical care and patient-centered outcomes. The presenter will use the clinical and empirical literature as well as knowledge in this area to inform guidelines for best practice.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Based on the presentation, the participants will be able to:

- List common psychological reactions among parents of NICU infants
- Discuss how diversity and individual differences may impact parents' reactions to the NICU experience
- Utilize screening tools and psychological interventions that can be utilized in the NICU to support parents
- Describe factors leading to burnout and compassion fatigue among NICU providers and strategies for improving interactions with parents

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Bonacquisti, A., Geller, P. A., & Patterson, C. A. (2020). Maternal depression, anxiety, stress, and maternal-infant attachment in the neonatal intensive care unit. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 38(3), 297-310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02646838.2019.1695041>
- Geller, P. A., Bonacquisti, A., & Patterson, C. A. (2018). Maternal experience of neonatal intensive care unit hospitalization: Trauma exposure and psychosocial responses. In M. Muzik & K. L. Rosenblum (Eds.), *Motherhood in the face of trauma: Pathways of healing and growth* (pp. 227-247). Springer International Publishing.
- Sabnis, A., Fojo, S., Nayak, S. S., Lopez, E., Tarn, D. M., & Zeltzer, L. (2019). Reducing parental trauma and stress in neonatal intensive care: Systematic review and meta-analysis of hospital interventions. *Journal of Perinatology: Official Journal of the California Perinatal Association*, 39(3), 375-386. doi:10.1038/s41372-018-0310-9

Hynan M. T., Steinberg, Z., Baker, L., Cicco, R., Geller, P. A., Lassen, S., Milford, C., Mounts, K. O., Patterson, C., Saxton, S., Segrec, L., & Stuebe, A. (2015). Recommendations for mental health professionals in the NICU. *Journal of Perinatology: Official Journal of the California Perinatal Association*, Dec; 35 (Suppl 1):S14-8. doi: 10.1038/jp.2015.144. PMID: 26597800; PMCID: PMC4660044.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER

Alexa Bonacquisti, PhD, PMH-C, is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine and a licensed psychologist with expertise in reproductive psychology and perinatal mental health. Dr. Bonacquisti earned her PhD in clinical psychology at Drexel University, with a concentration in health psychology. She completed an APA-accredited clinical internship at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine in Chapel Hill, specializing in women's mental health and behavioral medicine. Her postdoctoral fellowship focused on perinatal mental health in Drexel University's Department of Psychology and Mother Baby Connections program. She is certified as a specialist in perinatal mental health through Postpartum Support International (PMH-C). Dr. Bonacquisti's clinical and research interests focus on reproductive-related mood and anxiety disorders and mental health outcomes that occur in the context of reproductive functioning. Her work addresses coping with stressful reproductive events, such as infertility, pregnancy loss, and infant admission to a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). In addition, she is interested in developing and evaluating innovative psychological treatments in these contexts, such as the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) during the perinatal period. She has completed clinical training in the NICU at the

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia during which she performed psychological assessment and treatment of parents with NICU infants. She has also conducted research in several NICUs in the local area to assess maternal attachment and psychological symptoms during the NICU stay.

**Target Audience: Doctoral Level
Psychologists and Other Mental Health Professionals**
Level of Instruction: Intermediate
Number of CE Credits Offered: 1 CE credit
Cost: \$15

CRITERIA FOR EARNING CE

Full attendance is required to receive CE credit for each session. No partial credits are available. All participants must sign an attestation regarding attendance and indicate the type of CE credit they require through a link which will be provided following the session. At the conclusion of each session participants will be provided an additional link to complete an evaluation survey; we request that you take a few minutes to anonymously provide feedback. Co-sponsored by Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. Physicians: Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine is accredited by the American Osteopathic Association of medical education for physicians. Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine designates this program for a maximum of 1 hour of AOA Category 1- A credits and will report CME and specialty credits commensurate with the extent of the physician's participation in this activity.



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Further Information about the Refund/Cancellation Policy and any other questions may be obtained by contacting Katie Garson, M.S.Ed., Coordinator of Continuing Education at katiega@pcom.edu.