

Rapid review of Allied Health Professionals working in neonatal services

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Aim

To understand:

- 1 the impact and effectiveness of embedding Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) in neonatal services on patient outcomes, and
- 2 the effectiveness of early interventions provided by AHPs in neonatal units.

Evidence Base

7 studies reviewed - published between 2016 and 2024.



Key Findings

Low certainty evidence suggests AHPs embedded in neonatal services may

- improve gross motor ability
- lead to earlier oral feeding

Moderate certainty evidence suggests that early interventions provided by AHPs in neonatal units are associated with

- shorter length of stay
- better parental sensitivity
- earlier oral feeding
- small improvements in general cognitive and gross motor ability in infancy compared to standard care.

Evidence Gaps

Very limited evidence is available on AHPs embedded in neonatal services.

Few early intervention trials were from the UK, leading to uncertainty of applicability in the UK setting.

This review supports the idea that involvement of AHPs in neonatal units is likely to improve outcomes

Research Implications

There is no published evidence on the cost of AHPs working within neonatal units with marked variability in the reporting of cost estimates in the UK, making the evaluation of cost implications & recommendations difficult.

Subsequent economic evaluations could explore the budget impact to the NHS to align with recommendations from AHP professional bodies and Royal Colleges.

The full rapid review is available to view here:

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2024.07.23.24310638v2>