

WITCHITA, Kan., Oct. 9, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- I, Dr. Barbara Morrison, PhD, RN, CNM, am the ultimate, passionate educator and scholar. I thrive on sharing my knowledge and understanding of birth, newborns, newborn and family adaptation, Kangaroo Care, breastfeeding, bonding, and changing health care practices to provide optimal care to newborns and their families. Honing my expertise over 30 years of education, clinical practice and research in institutions and health care facilities across the US, I have expanded my vision: changing health care practices to maximize natural abilities of infants, mothers and fathers to adapt, bond with and nurture each other.

My fascination with newborns' abilities began while I was working at Frontier Nursing Service in Hyden, KY

(
www.frontiernursing.org
). Because Mary Breckinridge Hospital is very small and only did 6-8 deliveries a week I had the time to learn newborn assessments such as the Dubowitz and Ballard Scales for gestation age. This expertise led to certification as an Inpatient Obstetrical Nurse and later reliability certification for Brazelton's Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale, another assessment of newborns neurological and behavioral abilities. The more I learned of newborns' abilities the more fascinated I became. So back to school I went for a masters in nursing and certification as a Family Nurse Practitioner.

The fascination and exploration of newborns' abilities continued as Dr. Barb started teaching maternal-newborn nursing and served on the board of directors for Baby TALK, an organization coming alongside new families to provide support and education about newborns, young children and parenting (www.BabyTALK.org). My growing interest in newborn and new family development was during the 1990s, the decade of the brain. The research community was sharing so much about brain function and language, cognitive and emotional development. We were also starting to recognize the costs of separating infants from their mothers or primary caregivers. As well, during this time I gained personal experience in infant and child development as I adopted two girls from China. Nurturing my daughters to overcome developmental and psychosocial delays through holding, loving, co-sleeping, and lots of patience and understanding, strengthened my resolve to facilitate the early and healthy development of new families. Formal education and research, post-masters certificate in nurse-midwifery, certification as a Baby TALK teacher, Touchpoint Faculty training with Dr. T. Barry Brazelton

, and completing a PhD in Midwifery and Maternal-Child Health further expanded my knowledge and abilities. In my dissertation research I compared prenatal care practices among private, public and home birth midwives in the context of the philosophy of the American College of Nurse-Midwives. Together, the multiple experiences of the 1990s solidified my belief in the role of normal physiological birth, breastfeeding and care for the whole person and family during transitions to parenthood in optimizing newborn development.

Searching for new challenges my family and I moved to the Cleveland, Ohio area where I became a faculty member at Case Western Reserve University

, Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing. There I was blessed to work with and be mentored by Drs. Susan Ludington and Gene Anderson

, joining their research teams to explore and promote Kangaroo (skin-to-skin) care. My mantra soon became "Kangaroo Care for all full-term newborns," moving the practice beyond an intervention for infants in the neonatal intensive care unit or for newborns having difficulties breastfeeding. My initial research projects explored the postpartum environment, identifying interruptions (persons going in and out of a mother's room) as a barrier to breastfeeding initiation and kangaroo care. Recognizing the stress numerous interruptions and their unpredictability, I began to explore the interconnections among breastfeeding, kangaroo care, stress (interruptions), and the hormonal and neurologic development of mother and infant immediately after birth. This scholarship and the work with Drs. Ludington and Anderson have lead to the development of the Kangaroo Care Certification Course sponsored by the United States Institute of Kangaroo Care (www.kangaroocareusa.org) and the Skin-to-Skin Learner's Manual.

Now, my family and I have relocated to Wichita, KS so I could fill the Janice M. Riordan Distinguished Professorship in Maternal and Child Health at Wichita State University

School of Nursing. I continue to passionately advocate for kangaroo care and breastfeeding starting immediately after birth, and for non-separation of newborns and their mothers/parents. My scholarship and research endeavors continue to focus on the significance of Kangaroo (skin-to-skin) Care to breastfeeding, attachment, and newborn and mother psycho-neuro-endocrine development. Additionally, I am interested in modifying the hospital postpartum environment to better promote, protect and support breastfeeding and Kangaroo Care. My ultimate mission is to passionately advocate, educate and inspire health care reforms for newborns and their families.

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