

# Bonding in neonatal intensive care units: Experiences of extremely preterm infants? mothers

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**Background:** The birth of an extremely preterm infant can disrupt normal mother?infant physical contact and the care provided by the mother. This situation has an impact on the process of bonding between the mother and the child. **Aim:** The objective of this study was to describe and understand the experiences of mothers who have extremely preterm infants admitted in Neonatal Intensive Care Units with regard to their bonding process. **Methods:** An interpretive, qualitative research methodology using Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics was carried out. A focus group and eleven in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Data were collected between June and September of 2016. **Findings:** Sixteen women with a mean age of 34.4 years participated in the study. Two themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) premature labour and technological environment, a distorted motherhood, with the subthemes ?feeling of emptiness and emotional crisis? and ?the complexity of the environment and care generate an emotional swing?; (2) learning to be the mother of an extremely preterm infant, with the subthemes ?the difficulty of relating to a stranger? and ?forming the bond in spite of difficulties?. **Conclusions:** The bonding with extremely preterm infants is interrupted after giving birth. The maternal emotional state and the environment of the neonatal intensive care unit limit its development. Nursing care can facilitate mother?infant bonding by encouraging communication, participation in care, massaging or breastfeeding. © 2017

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Bonding

Mother?child relationship

Neonatal intensive care units

Preterm infant

Qualitative research

adolescent

adult

Article

child

child parent relation

clinical article

emotion

environment

female

hermeneutics

hospital admission

human

middle aged

mother

neonatal intensive care unit

newborn

personal experience

premature labor

prematurity

priority journal

semi structured interview

breast feeding

information processing

interview

male

mother

mother child relation

object relation

pregnancy

psychology

qualitative research

Adult

Breast Feeding

Emotions

Female

Focus Groups

Humans

Infant, Extremely Premature

Infant, Newborn

Infant, Premature

Intensive Care Units, Neonatal

Interviews as Topic

Male

Mother-Child Relations

Mothers

Object Attachment

Pregnancy

Qualitative Research