

Does mother and infant bed sharing pose a risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome?

Overview:

Infant sleep pattern and environment was a topic discussed with mothers throughout one of my clinical placements; we talked about 'Safe sleeping' for example: ensuring that the infant sleeps in the supine position, feet at the end of the bed etc. Bed sharing with infants is increasing because some midwives recommend it. I chose the topic of bed sharing because of the conflicting education provided to mothers, on one hand they are being told to do it and on the other they were educated not to.

In the early 1990's bed sharing in relation to infants sleep environment was exposed as a risk factor for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) (Das, Sanker, Agarwal & Paul, 2014). **Bed sharing is defined as an adult (usually the mother) and their infant sleeping together in the same adult bed**

Why bed sharing?

Studies have concluded that bed sharing provides:

- Promotion and continuation of breastfeeding
- Enhanced breast milk production.
- Increased levels of bonding between mother and infant.
- Better maternal sleep (Homer, Armari & Fowler, 2012).

Mothers utilise bed sharing as a sleep strategy despite numerous health campaigns and continued education concerning the risk associated with bed sharing (Homer et al., 2012).

- **Almost half** of the women in a study by Homer et al, 2012 used sleeping while feeding as a sleep strategy.
- Exhaustion, tiredness and stress generated from sleep deprivation significantly influenced mothers decisions to bed share with their infants..

45 INFANTS DIE FROM SIDS EACH YEAR IN NZ
(SIDS New Zealand, 2008)

Bed sharing and the risk of SIDS

Possible mechanisms of SIDS in relation to bed sharing are:

- Obstruction of infant airways
- Unintentional suffocation from incidences of head coverings
- Infants overheating
- Hypoxia due to re-breathing of expired gases

Smoking poses a risk of SIDS. Infant exposure to tobacco smoke impairs their arousal mechanism (Plunket, 2014), which in turn puts them in danger of SIDS because of their inability to respond to dangerous situations such as being accidentally suffocated.

An infant is 15 times more likely to die from SIDS when exposed to tobacco smoke.

Implication and recommendations

Promote the most protective sleep environment:

- * FACE UP, FACE CLEAR, SMOKE FREE
- * Co-sleeping in the same room, with the crib in close proximity to the mother (for first 6 months)
- * Use of Pepi-pods when bed sharing allows infants to have a safe sleeping environment.

Conclusion

While some research has shown that bed sharing aids in the facilitation of breastfeeding, others have identified it as a risk for SIDS. It is evident that bed sharing poses a risk of SIDS, with the primary concern being asphyxia. It may be that SIDS is never eradicated, however, with the use of education around the benefits and risks mothers are fully informed to make the best decision they see fit in regards to their infants

References:

- Das, R. R., Sanker, M.J., Agarwal, R., & Paul, V.K. (2014). Is "Bed Sharing" beneficial and safe during infancy? A systematic review. *International Journal of Pediatrics*, 56(1), 1-9. doi: 10.1155/2014/468538
- Homer, C., Armari, E., & Fowler, C. (2012). Bed-sharing with infants in a time of SIDS awareness. *Neonatal, Pediatric & Child Health Nursing*, 15 (2), 3-7.
- Plunket. (2014). *Sudden Unexpected death in infancy*. Retrieved from <http://www.plunket.org.nz/your-child/welcome-to-parenting/sudden-unexpected-death-in-infancy-sudi/>
- SIDS New Zealand. (2008). *Facts and Figures*. Retrieved from http://sids.org.nz/site/content/information/health_facts_and_figures/

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<u>PECOT category</u>	<u>Information relating to the question</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
Population	Mothers with new born infants and infants' aged to 12 months	This is the age that mothers tend to be more prone to bed sharing with their infants. It is also at this age that children are more likely to be at risk in relation to bed sharing.
Exposure (Intervention)	(Issue of interest) mothers bed sharing with infant	Articles will be reviewed to identify the issue of interest (bed sharing) and to outline the risks related to bed sharing and to identify why bed sharing happens.
Comparison/Control	Infants having their own bed and are positioned using 'safe sleeping' guidelines	This helps compare if infants who sleep in their own bed and mothers who follow 'safe sleeping' recommendations are less likely to die from SIDS.
Outcome	Reduce mother and infant bed sharing to decrease rates of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)	Outlining the risks in relation to bed sharing can provided a bases for health promotion for mothers who choose to bed share in order to try and reduce the risks that are associated with bed sharing such as SIDS.
Time	<i>Does not apply to this research review question</i>	<i>Due to no identifiable time period where change is expected.</i>

I have used Jackson's PECOT model (as cited in Schneider, Whitehead LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2013) (table.1.0) to structure my practice issue question in to a more suitable formal question to assist my search.

Schneider, Z., Whitehead., D., LoBiondo-Wood, G., & Haber, J. (2013). *Nursing and midwifery research methods and appraisal for evidence – based practice* (4th ed.). Sydney, NSW, Australia: Mosby.