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# Journal writing as a social support strategy for parents of premature infants: a pilot study

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## Abstract

*Background:* Having a premature baby is acknowledged to be stressful to parents. Journal writing combines practical, emotional and informational support that may be useful to these parents. *Method:* We conducted a study to assess the potential for promoting journal-writing for parents receiving social support in a special care nursery (SCN). Parents were provided with educational material on journal writing, and subsequently surveyed concerning their journal-writing during their child's hospitalization.

*Results:* Of the 73 parents enrolled, 32% kept a journal; of these, 73% felt it helped considerably in reducing stress, and 68% used it as a means of addressing the most stressful elements of their nursery experience. Journals were used primarily to document involvement in care (45%), record-keeping (36%), and organization of thoughts (27%).

All of those who kept a journal recommended it for use by other parents. *Conclusions*

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Encouraging parents to keep a journal is a constructive way of dealing with the SCN-related stress.



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## Keywords

Journal writing; Prematurity; Coping; Stress; Parents; Education

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