Mother Goose in the NICU: Support for the Neediest Infants and Their Families

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Abstract
Of the 76,510 babies born during an average week in the United States, 7,361—or about 10 percent—are born prematurely.1 Preterm babies, born
before the thirty-seventh week of gestation, can be born with underdeveloped organ systems and other health problems that impact their ability to survive
on their own outside of the womb.
Most of the tales included in any Mother Goose collection—and there are many such collections now—originated in the distant past as folk stories told to children. If there were an actual mother goose, she might well have been an 8th Century noblewoman named Bertrada II of Laon who, in 740, married Pepin the Short, King of the Franks, and in 742 bore his son Charles, immortalized as Charlemagne, the de facto founder of the Holy Roman Empire. Bertrada, who was a patroness of children and provided her over-achieving son his only education, was known as Berte aux grand pied, or Bertha Greatfoot. This supplement to the Critical Elements of Care for the Low Birth Weight Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Graduate (CEC - LBW) was developed by literature review and consultation with experts working with this population. The document is intended to provide an overview of the long-term special needs of the extremely low birth weight (ELBW) NICU graduate. Although such infants can experience a wide range of life-threatening neonatal complications, this supplement specifically addresses post-NICU care of ELBW infants who: 1) experienced the usual complications associated with extreme prematurity. Our services are designed to support parents anticipating a NICU birth or currently in the NICU, as well as “graduate” families with children no longer in need of inpatient care. NICU parents are the central force behind healthy infant development, and their needs exist on a continuum that begins with pre-term diagnosis and lasts long after discharge. NICU Families Northwest begins a dialogue with families through outreach initiatives that reinforce hospital goals such as healthy parent-baby bonding and self-care. The dialogue continues online for parents who seek to connect with peers in an e