

OP\_15

**Perspectives of special education teachers on using Individualized Education Plans during online education for children with Autism between 5 to 10 years of age in Gampaha district.**

Amarasinghe WMAGAS<sup>1</sup>, Hettiarachchi YKK<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Disability Studies, University of Kelaniya*

**Introduction:** Preterm infants are admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for special care and monitoring due to their various complications. Anecdotally, during the hospitalization in the local NICU, mothers' and fathers' involvement and confidence in the feeding-related care of their premature infants is low and there is a lack of interaction between the infant.

**Objective:** To explore both mothers' and fathers' experience of feeding-related care of their premature infants while admitted to a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in Sri Lanka.

**Method:** A qualitative study using a phenomenological approach was carried out among ten couples of participants who have premature infants (born between 28 -37 weeks gestational age) with admitted to the NICU due to feeding difficulties. A semi structured interview was conducted via telephone using an interview guide with 15 open ended questions. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

**Results:** Three themes and subthemes emerged. The main themes were Parental role, Parent-infant closeness and separation in NICUs and Speech and Language Therapy services support for feeding related care in a local NICU. The results illuminated that the majority of mothers had a minimal role in the NICU and all the fathers reported that they have been excluded from infant care in the NICU.

**Conclusion:** Overall there is a lack of satisfaction on the minimal parental involvement in infant feeding care in the NICU. Mothers' and fathers' perceived experience and knowledge received during hospitalization differently. In Sri Lanka fathers are the 'forgotten' parent in terms of early feeding interventions. Parents show a satisfaction about the support of the NICU staff and SLT.