

What Are Infants Telling Us: From Neonatal Nursery Care to Supporting Optimal Infant Development



Dr Natalie Duffy
Neonatologist

Dr Nat Duffy is a consultant neonatologist, working in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of the Mercy Hospital for Women,

Heidelberg, a busy tertiary neonatal unit caring for infants born from 22 weeks to full term. She also works for PIPER, the Paediatric Infant and Perinatal Emergency Retrieval service, based at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne.

In NICU, she is the medical lead for the infant and family centred neurodevelopmental care special interest group and has co-authored the statewide guidelines on this same topic. For PIPER, she works closely with Ambulance Victoria, teaching paramedics how to safely care for infants born out of hospital.

Nat is a Newborn Behavioural Observations (NBO) trainer, with NBO Australasia, teaching the Newborn Behavioral Observation system to Oceania and beyond. She has co-authored the Newborn Traffic Light Tool®, a learning resource for clinicians to utilise when supporting infants during times of pain and stress. Her research interests lie with infant mental health and trauma informed neurodevelopmental care.

She is completing her PhD at the University of Melbourne. She has utilised qualitative methodology to explore an infant's lived experience of hospitalisation in NICU. Nat has numerous publications in this field and has been the invited speaker at both local and international conferences.



Erin Church
Registered Nurse,
Neonatal Intensive Care

Erin Church is a dedicated Neonatal Nurse, the chairperson of the Australian College of Neonatal Nurses' (ACNN)

Neurodevelopmental Care Special Interest Group (NDC SIG), and a Higher Degree Research student at La Trobe University. Erin completed her Postgraduate Diploma of Nursing (Neonatal Intensive Care) at La Trobe University in 2023 and currently works at Mercy Hospital for Women, Heidelberg, where she is an active member of their Infant and Family Centred Developmental Care (IFCDC) SIG.

Erin has a passion for furthering neuroprotective IFCDC and has completed training in Newborn Behavioural Observations (NBO), Family and Infant Neurodevelopmental Education (FINE) 1; and is currently working toward becoming an NBO trainer. Working collaboratively with infant behaviour and mental health experts A/Prof. Susan Nicolson, Dr. Natalie Duffy, Danielle Atkins, and A/Prof. Campbell Paul, Erin is the lead author of a clinical infant advocacy tool for use during painful and stressful procedures - The Newborn Traffic Light Tool® - the subject of two current research studies and Erin's Professional Doctorate.



Dr Susan Nicolson
General Practitioner

Dr. Susan Nicolson is a General Practitioner and infant mental health clinician, educator and researcher at the Royal Women's

Hospital in Melbourne. She is an Associate Professor in the Department of General Practice and Primary Care at the University of Melbourne.

Susan has worked as an infant mental health clinician in the community, in hospital clinics and in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). She is a master trainer in the Newborn Behavioral Observations (NBO) system and has trained professionals across Australia and around the world. Susan was a lead researcher in the first randomised controlled trial to test NBO in an Australian at-risk population. She is a proud member of the team that developed the Newborn Traffic Light Tool, and the supervisory panel for Dr Natalie Duffy's PhD study.



Facilitator:
Vicki Mansfield
Practice Development
Officer, Emerging
Minds

Vicki Mansfield, is a Practice Development Officer with Emerging Minds, has over 30 years experience working with children and families.

Vicki has worked in a broad range of social work roles including homelessness services, child and adolescent mental health, family and domestic violence services, child protection, acute hospital settings and private practice.

For the last 15 years Vicki's primary area of focus has been perinatal and infant mental health, providing clinical services, consultation, and reflective supervision across Australia. Vicki has a strong commitment to developing relationship focused practice knowledge and skills, with the aim to promote mental health in the early years.

Vicki places great value in supporting parents in the perinatal period and feels this is a time of transformation and change as parent and child get to know each other. She enjoys the playfulness and creativity that comes with working with children and is committed to holding a safe space for the child's voice and individual uniqueness to shine.

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FINAL REPORT

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