Some Research Perspectives on the Use of Information and Communication Technology between the Neonatal Unit and the Parents of Preterm-born Infants from a Swedish Horizon

Birgitta LINDBERG a,1, and Kerstin ÖHRLING b

a b Luleå University of Technology, Luleå, Sweden

Keywords: Preterm-born, premature, infant, parents, support, ICT, NICU

Background: Having a prematurely born infant has long-term impact on parents’ experiences of having a baby and on parent-infant relationship. Prematurely born infants need care at a neonatal unit for weeks or months. New demands by increased parental responsibility are created when the child is going to be discharged from the neonatal unit.

Purpose: The purpose of this presentation is to introduce the project Neonatal Nursing Care at home via the information and communication technology (ICT) and share some methodological perspectives on the research process. It also aims to present experiences of planning and implementing this ICT project as well as discuss some of the findings.

Problem: Can ICT be used as a way to support parents of preterm-born children after discharge from the neonatal unit? This question was raised when the project started.

Method: A case study design was used to implement the ICT at one neonatal unit in the North of Sweden in collaboration with the staff of Luleå University of Technology, Sunderby Hospital, and the parents of preterm-born infants. Ethical approval was obtained before the study was conducted. Data were collected by individual interviews and field notes with parents and nurses, and were analyzed by qualitative content analysis.

Results: It was found that ICT created support to parents when being at home for the first time with their preterm infants. By being able to contact the staff 24 hours a day via video and sound, their anxiety decreased and parental confidence was supported. After the project was completed, the ICT has been permanently used as a new standard in the neonatal care.

1 Corresponding Author: Birgitta Lindberg, Division of Nursing, Department of Health Sciences, Luleå University of Technology, SE-97187 Luleå, Sweden