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Parental perceptions of good care following congenital cardiac surgery, a qualitative study

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Introduction: Annually, around 4000 cardiac operations are undertaken on neonates and infants in the UK. Hospitalisation is known to have a negative impact on parental emotional well-being and stress levels, adding to the complexity of caring for this group. Recent evidence has highlighted a strong relationship between parental perception of risk in relation to surgery, and their perception of ‘good care’.

Aim: To explore parental perceptions of ‘good care’ following congenital cardiac surgery.

Methods: A qualitative methodology was applied to generate narrative data. Twelve parents (nine mothers, three fathers) were recruited. Semi structured interviews were undertaken and transcribed verbatim on an ongoing basis. A systematic and iterative approach of analysis based on the constant comparative method was used, assisted by NVIVO software to organise the data. Ethical permission was granted by a local NRES.

Results: Three broad themes were identified that encompassed parental perception of good care: relationships, reflecting the interactions between staff, parents and child; environment, highlighting the impact of the care environment on parental perceptions of safety; and practicalities, which reflects the day to day complexities of parenting a hospitalised child.

Conclusion: Whilst the virtues of a good nurse are extoled through the 6C’s, parental perceptions of good care encompass a much wider definition.