

2012 Military Health System CONFERENCE



Infant Massage:

Raising Parental Confidence Through Nurturing Touch

The MHS: Healthcare to Health

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Introduction



- Family violence: A public health issue for military families with devastating after effects
 - 200 cases of child maltreatment in 18 city region of Hampton Roads in 2010
- Research shows that when exposed to human touch infants cry less and display calmer temperament
- Greater infant soothability contributes to increased parental confidence and results in less frustration/likelihood to cause harm

Methods



- Goals of Infant Massage Program
 - To increase parental confidence by teaching nurturing behavior through touch
 - Providing emotional support through education during the postpartum period
- Monthly, 2 hour class for parents and infants
 - Focus: Infants 2-4 months, age group at highest risk for maltreatment
 - Classes are casual, interactive, encourage participation, and use a variety of adult learning methods

Results



■ Parent Self-Assessment Tool

– Ability to provide nurturing touch:

- **Prior to class**: 6% “very confident,” 51% “confident,” **42% “mildly to moderately worried”**
- **After class**: 82% “very confident,” 18% “confident”

– Overall confidence as a parent:

- **Prior to class**: 8% “very confident,” 49% “confident,” **42% “mildly to moderately worried”**
- **After class**: 73% “very confident,” 27% “confident”

Conclusions & Recommendations



- Infant Massage gaining notoriety
 - Largest source of referrals is by word of mouth
 - Positive feedback, increased demand for additional classes, locations and age groups
- Future goal
 - IRB approval for local research study
- Marketable for any setting in the DOD
 - Opportunity to reach out to families
 - Military families share unique stressors
 - Potential to serve as parent support group