



## **MATERNAL EXPERIENCE WITH CONGENITAL SURGICAL PROBLEMS IN NEONATES MANAGED IN A PEDIATRIC INTENSIVE CARE UNIT**

Wijekoon W.M.N.K., Jayathilake S.N.B.G.C.K., Maldeniya D.R.R.,  
Dassanayake C.P.K.D., Kodagoda A.S.K.\* and De Silva B.S.S.

Department of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences,  
The Open University of Sri Lanka  
askod@ou.ac.lk

### **Abstract**

Mothers who are having a neonate with congenital surgical problems face a highly stressful situation. Their experience is fraught with a range of emotions of fear and powerlessness. Exploring the experiences may provide insight to assist the mothers in managing difficult circumstances by addressing their needs. The study aim was to explore the experience of mothers with babies having congenital surgical problems in the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit at Teaching Hospital Kandy (THK). A phenomenological research design was used in this qualitative study. Data were collected by semi-structured in-depth interviews over a one month from purposively selected 15 mothers at the PICU. The ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of THK. Data were analysed using the thematic analysis methods. Five themes that emerged from the findings are physical discomforts, psychological distress, lack of family support, social isolation, and economic difficulties. Almost all the mothers expressed that they are suffering from physical discomforts due to breast engorgement, caesarean section surgical site pain, swollen legs, loss of appetite and poor hygiene. Feeling of fear, sadness, anxiety, and disappointment due to separation and potential threat to the baby have a harmful influence on their mental health. Further, lack of family support due to abandonment by relatives and neglect by society has led to social isolation and financial difficulties resulting in negative impact on the socio-economical aspect. Mothers with babies having congenital surgical problems are suffering from various physical, psychological, and socioeconomic difficulties. Thus, organizing awareness programmes regarding the treatment plan and encouraging support groups among mothers, facilitating coping techniques to reduce the burden and improve their wellbeing while developing incorporated care with health professionals and the family is recommended.

**Keywords:** *Neonatal, Congenital surgical problems, Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, Mothers' experience*