

# Maternal Experience with Infant Care after Hospital Discharge: A Literature Review

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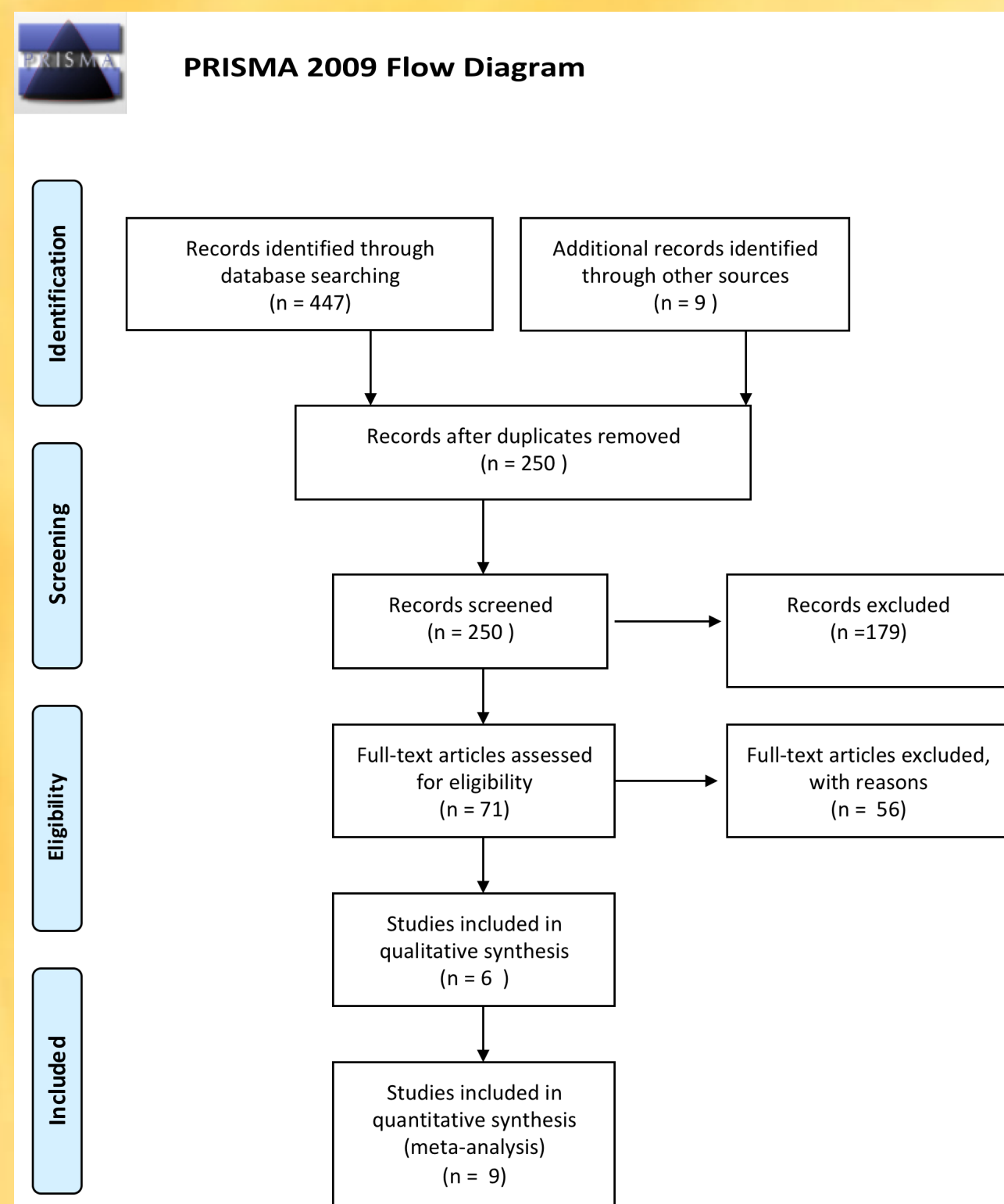
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## OBJECTIVES

To identify how mothers with preterm infants and mothers with full term infants are similar and different in their concerns about providing care for their infants after hospital discharge.

## APPROACH

- MEDLINE (PubMed) and the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) databases were searched.
- 239 articles were retrieved from PubMed and 238 from CINAHL.
- 9 articles were identified by reviewing the reference lists of articles found in the database searches.



## RESULTS

- Fifteen studies included discharge teaching, mothers' readiness for discharge, and maternal emotional responses after discharge and/or sources of information.
- Eight of the studies examined mothers with preterm babies, three evaluated first time mothers and five studies examined mothers with full term infants.
- Six studies were qualitative, eight were quantitative and one used a mixed design.

### How Full Term Mothers Handle Care after Discharge

- ❖ **Major Concerns after Discharge**
  - ❑ Concerns about maternal and infant health after discharge were experienced within the first three days after discharge.
  - ❑ Mothers wanted more time at the hospital to recuperate physically and emotionally before discharge.
  - ❑ Breast care, physical health, postpartum nutrition and warning signs of maternal health problems were not taught to mothers or included in the educational materials they received.
  - ❑ Mothers also reported not receiving education about breastfeeding, bottle-feeding, newborn development and signs and symptoms of illness.
- ❖ **Discharge Teaching and Readiness**
  - ❑ Quality of discharge teaching was significantly and positively associated with readiness for discharge.
  - ❑ Mothers with full term infants who reported not being ready for discharge were significantly unhappier than mothers who were prepared for discharge.
  - ❑ Mothers who were not ready for discharge were more likely to place their infants in prone sleeping position and to be unhappy than mothers ready for discharge.

- ❖ **Infant Feeding Challenges**
  - ❑ Mothers' breastfeeding needs varied and in many cases were unmet during hospitalization.
  - ❑ Lack of public support through stigmatization of public breastfeeding and lack of facilities to promote breastfeeding in public places discouraged breastfeeding.

### How Preterm Mothers Handle Care Post Discharge

- ❖ **Emotional Responses after Discharge**
  - ❑ Mothers with preterm babies expressed negative emotional responses such as fear, anxiety, and guilt after hospital discharge.
  - ❑ Mothers of preterm infants doubted their ability to take care of the baby and to carry out discharge teaching from nurses but were committed to providing the best care possible.

- ❖ **Major Concerns after Discharge**
  - ❑ Some mothers reported not knowing their infants well and described the first day at home as the hardest, filled with uncertainty and angst.
  - ❑ Most mothers worried about their infant's medical status and future development.
  - ❑ Post discharge hospital utilization was high in the first 3 days after discharge.

- ❖ **Preterm Mothers' Perceptions and Challenges**
  - ❑ Mothers and staff differed significantly on whether information on infant care was actually discussed as part of the discharge teaching process or not.
  - ❑ Poor quality discharge teaching was associated with increased likelihood of infant emergency room visitation.

- ❖ **Coping with Infant Care after Discharge**
  - ❑ Mothers were ill prepared to handle issues in caring for their newborns and to deal with their own insecurities at home.
  - ❑ The majority of mothers with preterm infants slept in the same bed with their infants wanting to give them "body heat."

### How First Time Mothers Handled Care after Discharge

- ❖ **Sources of Information**
  - ❑ Mothers received support from friends, family, colleagues, and health care professionals.
  - ❑ Health care professionals were considered an important and dependable source of information in addition to pregnancy books.
  - ❑ First time mothers may over-utilize health services because of insufficient knowledge on how to handle problems at home, when to contact a provider and ancillary services available.
- ❖ **Coping with Infant Care after Discharge**
  - ❑ The maternity experience was described as positive or negative; mothers' negative experiences included fatigue and physical discomfort.
- ❖ **Infant Feeding Challenges**
  - ❑ Breastfeeding was the topic in which first time mothers were most interested, and they reported they were not adequately prepared for it.
  - ❑ The most common breastfeeding problems included the correct positioning of the infant during feeding and after breastfeeding, checking if the baby was hungry, breast engorgement, and cracked nipples.

## CONCLUSION

- Negative emotional responses after discharge are more common in mothers with preterm babies than full term mothers.
- The most prevalent concerns of mothers with preterm babies were infants' health and medical issues after discharge.
- Coping with infants in the first night, one week and a month after discharge was a major challenge for the mothers especially those with preterm babies.
- Like preterm mothers, full term and first time mothers reported needing professional help in the first three days after discharge.
- Healthy infants were concerned about early discharge, their own health and basic care of their infants.

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