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Evaluation of a Paediatric Intensive Care Follow-Up Clinic: It's Good to Talk!

Objective: To establish the impact of a Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) follow-up clinic on parents' distress. **Method:** In a prospective randomised controlled trial, parents of 133 children admitted to an eight-bed PICU for > 12 hours were randomly allocated to intervention (follow-up clinic appointment offered 2 months after discharge) or control (no appointment). Parent stress was assessed at discharge using the Parental Stressor Scale: PICU. Posttraumatic stress, anxiety and depression were assessed 5 months later by postal questionnaire. **Results:** Outcome data were obtained for 105 parents. Whole group analyses revealed no significant differences in psychological outcome between control and intervention groups. However, there was an intervention effect for a sub-group (n = 55) who had reported baseline stress scores above median. Within this sub-group, parents who received the intervention were less likely to report clinically significant levels of posttraumatic stress (25% vs 56%, $p = .018$) or depression (19% vs 52%, $p = .009$) than controls. **Discussion:** These results do not justify routine provision of PICU follow-up clinic appointments for all parents. However, for parents who find the admission particularly traumatic, distress rates might be reduced by a simple intervention, which was feasible in a clinical setting.