That quote stayed with me because many new nurses will eventually look at an assignment, or several assignments, and wonder, "How in the world am I qualified to handle this?" Sometimes, being trusted with greater responsibility can remind us that others recognize our growth and capabilities, even when we do not yet see them in ourselves. However, pressure does not automatically mean an assignment is safe, and confidence does not mean handling everything alone. True confidence also means recognizing your limits, using the resources around you, asking for help, and speaking up when a patient's needs or your workload exceed what you can safely manage. ■

Hop, Skip, and a Bond: The Leap Toward Emotional Attachment Through Kangaroo Care (KC) in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

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Kangaroo Care (KC), or routine skin-to-skin contact, is a critical yet often underused intervention in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Nationally, 9–13% of infants are admitted to NICUs, where families frequently experience stress, separation, and disrupted bonding (Yarlagadda et al., 2025). Limited kangaroo care (KC), often restricted by space, staffing, or policy barriers, negatively affects parental attachment and infant physiologic stability (Lisanti et al., 2021). In contrast, early and consistent KC improves thermoregulation, neurobehavior, respiratory outcomes, feeding, and weight gain (Clarke-Sather et al., 2022). KC may also strengthen maternal–infant attachment, reduce maternal stress and cortisol levels, and increase breastfeeding frequency and infant growth (Mehrpisheh et al.,2022). Collectively, these findings highlight KC as a high-value, evidence-based practice that enhances quality, safety, and family-centered outcomes in the NICU.

Review of Literature

A comprehensive literature search was conducted in collaboration with a health sciences librarian to examine the impact of kangaroo care on parent–infant bonding in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The databases searched included CINAHL, Pubmed, and OVID while search terms encompassed "Kangaroo Care", "Bonding", "Skin-to-skin", and "Attachment." After evaluating a total of sixty different articles meeting the previously stated search terms, eight articles were used to formulate our final findings and guide our research study. Articles published in English and within the last five years were considered for inclusion. The search yielded systematic reviews, randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental studies, and observational research. Studies were selected based on their relevance to kangaroo care, skin-to-skin contact, parent–infant bonding, and the NICU population. These diverse forms of evidence, ranging from level I to VI, provided a broad understanding of how kangaroo care influences both infant outcomes and the parent–infant relationship.

The findings consistently demonstrated that kangaroo care positively influences bonding between parents and their hospitalized infants. Across the literature, parents who participated in skin-to-skin contact reported stronger emotional connections, increased confidence in their caregiving abilities, and greater involvement in their infant's care (Kulkarni et al., 2025). Several studies also found that longer durations and more frequent sessions of kangaroo care were associated with improved maternal and infant outcomes, including enhanced attachment and reduced parental stress (Kulkarni et al., 2025). Common themes identified throughout the literature included the importance of sustained skin-to-skin contact, the role of kangaroo care in promoting parental confidence and engagement, and the challenges families face in establishing bonds within the highly technological and stressful NICU environment. Overall, the evidence supports kangaroo care as a simple, cost-effective, and evidence-based intervention that strengthens parent–infant bonding while improving the experience of families navigating neonatal intensive care.

Practice Recommendations

Routine Kangaroo Care is strongly supported by evidence and requires a structured, evidence-based implementation approach to ensure consistent NICU practice. Successful adoption depends on comprehensive staff education, competency training, standardized protocols, and interdisciplinary collaboration to promote provider confidence, infant safety, and parental participation (Yarlagadda et al., 2025).

Nurses play a central role by introducing Kangaroo Care early, providing hands-on guidance, assessing infant readiness, and addressing parental concerns to strengthen engagement. Protocols should clearly define eligibility, session timing and duration, monitoring requirements, documentation, and safe positioning and transfer techniques. Guided by Lewin's Change Theory, education prepares staff for change, standardized workflows integrate Kangaroo Care into practice, and ongoing policy reinforcement, outcome monitoring, feedback, and continued training sustain long-term implementation. Clustering care activities and encouraging parental involvement promote longer skin-to-skin sessions, improving infant physiologic stability, parent-infant bonding, family well-being, shorter NICU stays, and reduced healthcare resource utilization with minimal implementation costs (Kulkarni et al., 2025).

Areas for Future Investigation

Additional information is needed to evaluate differences in outcomes between mothers and fathers as well as the long-term impacts of kangaroo care on bonding and developmental outcomes on the infant later in life. The current evidence and studies evaluated throughout research have consistently demonstrated that early, safe, and consistent implementation of kangaroo care provides meaningful benefits for both the infants and their families (Yarlagadda et al., 2025). Together, these practices help to maximize the physical, developmental, and emotional benefits of kangaroo care for the infant and their families. ■

We are four recent BSN graduates united by a shared commitment to evidence-based practice and improving outcomes for infants and their families. Our clinical training shaped our deep interest in intensive care and highlighted the value of family-centered interventions, specifically, Kangaroo Care. Through this article, we sought to examine the role of Kangaroo Care in strengthening parent-infant attachment while supporting positive neonatal outcomes. As we begin our nursing careers, we hope our work contributes to the growing body of nursing knowledge and encourages the continued integration of evidence-based, family-centered care in the NICU.

References online:
myamericannurse.com/?p=428864

New Beginnings and Next Chapters



Looking back, advice such as Ruth Bader Ginsberg's is similiar to that of my mentors including my mother that has shaped much of my approach to leadership. It also aligns closely with my own strengths: Includer, Maximizer, Belief, Connectedness, and Developer. These strengths have helped me focus on building relationships, supporting others, strengthening the foundations laid by those before me, and believing deeply in the importance of our shared work.

It has been an honor and a privilege to work alongside the ONA Board and with you, our members, as we have advanced nursing across Oklahoma.

Together, we have created meaningful opportunities for nurses to connect, learn, lead, and advocate. Our Annual Convention and The Oklahoma Nurse publication continue to serve as cornerstones of professional engagement. Our membership has grown, and we have expanded support for both new-to-practice nurses and experienced professionals. While important work remains ahead, I am deeply proud of what we have accomplished as a professional community.

As ONA moves forward, an important focus continues to be modernization,

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard."

– A.A. Milne

"Work for what you believe in, but pick your battles, and don't burn your bridges. Don't be afraid to take charge, think about what you want, then do the work, but then enjoy what makes you happy, bring along your crew, have a sense of humor."

– Ruth Bader Ginsburg, in Notorious RBG by Irin Carmon