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App to support parents caring for premature babies

New parents of premature babies in south western Sydney are benefitting from access to a free healthcare app which provides easily accessible information and real-life content during and after their hospital stay.

The Neonatal Care and Me app helps parents and carers by complementing the high-quality care, help and support they receive in Neonatal Intensive Care Units and Special Care Nurseries.

The District's Chief Executive Amanda Larkin said the free app was designed by experts to give parents the additional skills and peace of mind at their fingertips so they can learn at their own pace and support their baby.

"It can be used from any location and at any time of the day or night. It's part of our commitment to providing the right information to parents and carers at the right time and to further support families during this special time in their child's growth and development," Ms Larkin said.

Premature baby Ayaan Dissanayaka arrived into the world three months early, weighing just 1kg. His proud mum Manoshi Wickramasinghe felt empowered and supported to care for her first-born child thanks to the app.

"I really liked the discharge information because it explains what to do when you take your baby home for the first time, how to bath and cuddle him and position him when he's sleeping," said Mrs Wickramasinghe, who was one of the first parents to use the app.

"I also liked the 'tummy time' activities to build his strength and the singing and reading sections which focus on his development. This app makes a big impact on parents because having a premature baby can feel overwhelming at times."

The helpful tool can be used by parents and carers during and after their hospital stay. It shares real-life content to help people to care for their early bundle of joy including taking baby's temperature, tube feeding, changing an oxygen probe and tracking age and weight on the growth chart.

Neonatal Care and Me was developed by experienced Nursing and Allied Health clinicians from Neonatal Intensive Care Units and Special Care Nurseries at hospitals across South Western Sydney Local Health District.

Campbelltown Hospital Paediatric Occupational Therapy Team Leader Sarah Deeth helped design the app and said it contained easily accessible information to assist families to care for their baby in a developmentally sensitive way.

“Access to consistent and high-quality neurodevelopmental care is essential to the baby’s immediate and long-term development,” Ms Deeth said.

Professor Josephine Chow, Director Strategy and Partnerships, said the app was developed by the District’s Clinical Innovation and Business Unit part of its innovative Accelerate Projects and Implementation Program. It formed a corporate partnership with TATA Consultancy Services (TCS), a global IT services, consulting and business solutions organisation, which created the structure for the app.

The helpful tool has been tested by the Miracle Babies Foundation, which supports premature and sick babies, their families and the hospitals that care for them.

Neonatal Care and Me can be downloaded from the App Stores for both Android and iOS devices.