Abstract

Objective: The present study is a literature review to identify the effects of a very low birth weight newborn on family. This is an important instrument to clarify epidemiological issues and to suggest the directions for health policy efforts. Method: A three-step review was carried out using databases of journals indexed for Medline/Lilacs/Scielo/Cochrane published between 1966 and 2005 using specific criteria of inclusion. The first step selected 12 articles from 2,889 when searching for the keyword "very low birth weight infant"; the second step used the crossing of keyword "premature infant" with other pertinent keywords and terms resulting in 191 articles generating 7 more articles matching the criteria of inclusion. The third step was to analyze the references of articles in steps 1 and 2 (12 + 7 = 19), selecting 3 additional ones totalizing 22 selected articles. Result: Evidences in literature state that the families of very low birth weight newborns suffer potential negative effects on their operational dynamics, which is associated to the clinical seriousness, the age and the neuropsycomotor development of such children. It seems that the mother is the most affected member due to the situation imposed to the family, and the one who needs psychosocial support more frequently. Conclusion: The number of existing studies is still insufficient to clarify whether the effects on the family considering all their aspects are preponderantly positive or negative.

Keywords

Very low birth weight infant, Premature infant, Family, Stress, Stressful events, Life change events, Review literature.