Abstract
Objective Exploring maternal experience with premature newborn children in a domestic environment. Methods The study was qualitative and used focus group interviews with 24 women who had had preterm deliveries in a public maternity hospital located in Northeast Brazil during June and October 2005. The mothers returned to the hospital facility at least 30 days after the newborn were discharged to share their experiences in caring for a premature infant at home. Results Interview data was analysed for content, four thematic nuclei being identified: hospital discharge, preparing the family for discharge, caring for a premature baby at home and life changes arising from the premature birth. The greatest difficulties reported by the mothers in caring for their premature children at home were related to feeding and feelings of insecurity and fear were expressed which showed the need for a support network for the families following discharge. Conclusions The mothers care of premature infants at home represented changes for parents in everyday family life, work and social life, thus showing the need for a support network for them during the transition from hospital to home when considering premature children.

Keywords
Premature birth, maternal behavior, mother-child relationship.