

## Abstract

**Title:** The effects of an oral - stimulation program in preterm infants on mothers' empowerment at Queen Sirikit National Institute of Child Health.

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**Background:** Preterm infants often have problems with digestion, nutrient absorption and coordination of sucking, swallowing and breathing reflex. Knowledge of oral - stimulation and self-confidence of mothers is important in taking care of preterm infants.

**Objective:** To study the effects of the empowerment on mothers according to oral - stimulation program in preterm infants. The assessments were on mothers' perception, self-confidence, and knowledge of oral - stimulation in preterm infants.

**Methods:** Research development process divided into 4 steps: 1) situation analysis by in-depth interviews, 2) developing empowerment program, 3) examine the program's implementation on samples of mothers and preterm infants for 23 pairs, and 4) evaluation of results. Data were analyzed by percentage, mean, standard deviation, and test the statistically significant difference of the arithmetic mean with Wilcoxon signed-ranks test to compare mother's perception, self-confidence, and knowledge of mothers on oral - stimulation.

**Result:** The empowerment program consisted of four components which were the discovering reality, critical reflection, taking charge and holding on. After program implementation, mothers' perception was at moderate level ( $\bar{X} = 12.22$ ), mothers' self-confidence and stimulation knowledge were at high level ( $\bar{X} = 2.50$  and  $21.39$ , respectively). Mothers' perception, self-confidence, and stimulation knowledge were significantly higher at post-test,  $p$ -value  $< 0.01$ .

**Conclusion:** This study shows the effectiveness of an empowerment program to enhance the competency and skills among mothers of preterm infants. Further study should develop other empowerment program for parents who care for pediatric patients.

**Keywords.** *Empowerment program, preterm, oral – stimulation, mother*