

**THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF PRETERM CHILDREN: WHAT DO TEACHERS KNOW?**C. Moriarty<sup>1</sup>, C. Beer<sup>1</sup>, S. Johnson<sup>2</sup>*<sup>1</sup>School of Community Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, <sup>2</sup>Department of Health Sciences, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK*

**Background:** Children born preterm are at increased risk for learning difficulties and special educational needs (SEN) compared with term-born peers. This will challenge the education system as increasing numbers survive. To date, teachers' knowledge in this area has not been studied.

**Aim:** To investigate teachers' knowledge of the outcomes and educational needs of children born preterm.

**Methods:** A qualitative study of 13 education professionals in UK primary schools. Semi-structured interviews explored:

- (I) knowledge and opinions about educational outcomes following preterm birth,
- (II) identification of birth status and delayed school entry,
- (III) information needs. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using Thematic and Content Analysis.

**Results:**

(I) An important inductive theme to emerge was that knowledge of the outcomes of preterm birth arose exclusively from personal experience rather than formal training. Awareness of the risk for physical problems and developmental, cognitive and educational sequelae was superficial and came from experience at home or in the classroom.

(II) Identification of a child's birth status was considered advantageous by most teachers, however they were less supportive of delayed school entry.

(III) Information about potential learning difficulties and strategies for educational management was wanted by 10/13 teachers.

**Conclusions:** Teachers' knowledge of the educational needs of preterm children is limited and related only to personal experience. There is a pressing need to communicate information to education professionals about the impact of preterm birth on long-term outcomes for educational management and service provision. These findings will be used to develop structured questionnaires to further explore this area.