Unconditional Cash Transfers to Low-income Preterm Infants and Their Families: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial

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Objective: Unconditional cash transfers (UCTs)-no strings attached monthly payments-to low-income families may reduce financial stress and improve health outcomes. We sought to determine the feasibility and acceptability of randomizing low-income caregivers of preterm infants to a high- or low-value UCT for 4 months.

Study design: Parallel, pilot randomized controlled trial that was preregistered (ClinicalTrials.gov NCT05930327). We enrolled 24 birthing parent-infant dyads. The intervention was a $325 monthly UCT and the active control was a $25 monthly UCT.

Result: The intervention was feasible and universally acceptable among families in the high-value cash transfer arm. Exploratory outcomes revealed a high degree of financial strain, stress, and depressive symptoms.

Conclusion: This study provides feasibility, acceptability, and preliminary efficacy data to inform a future, larger trial to examine the impacts of UCTs to low-income birthing parents of preterm infants.

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