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AUGUST Edition | 2026

GFCNI global foundation for the care of newborn infants NEWSLETTER

Dear friends and supporters of GFCNI,

For many of us in the Northern Hemisphere, August has arrived with temperatures that make the growing risks of extreme heat difficult to ignore. Heat increasingly shapes the conditions in which women give birth, newborns receive care, and healthcare professionals do their work. This edition therefore highlights the International Confederation of Midwives' timely new guide, which translates emerging evidence into practical measures for protecting families, staff, and health facilities during heatwaves.

We also explore two important questions in preterm care. A multicenter trial examines whether extending caffeine therapy can reduce intermittent hypoxia after routine treatment ends, while a new commentary asks whether weight gain alone tells us enough about healthy growth. Together, these contributions remind us that progress depends not only on developing new interventions, but also on measuring the outcomes that truly matter – and measuring them consistently.

I hope this edition offers useful evidence, practical guidance, and fresh ideas for your daily work.

Best wishes,

Silke Mader and the GFCNI team

GFCNI

© PD Dr. Dietmar Schlembach

A NEW ROLE, A FAMILIAR FACE

Dr. Dietmar Schlembach Joins the Executive Board

As of August 1, 2026, GFCNI welcomes PD Dr. Dietmar Schlembach as the new volunteer Vice Chair of the Executive Board, taking on the role previously held by Nicole Thiele. Dr. Schlembach is a long-standing and trusted member of the GFCNI community who has supported the foundation for many years, including as Chair of the Trustee Board and as Chair of the Birth and Transfer Topic Expert Group of the European Standards of Care for Newborn Health. As an expert in Maternal-Fetal Medicine and Obstetrics, he also brings extensive clinical, research, and leadership experience to the Executive Board. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with him in this new role and our shared commitment to improving maternal and newborn health.
At the same time, we would also like to thank Nicole Thiele for her many years of dedicated work on the Executive Board and for helping shape GFCNI into the organization it is today. We are happy that Nicole will remain closely connected to GFCNI as a member of the Board of Directors.

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PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Help Us Better Support NICU Families

In May 2025, we launched Neopedia to help families navigate their NICU journey. Through an online survey that we recently created, parents, caregivers, and healthcare professionals can now share their feedback, and families are also invited to anonymously share their personal NICU experiences. Your feedback will help us better understand what families need, how they are involved in their baby’s care, and how information can be improved before, during, and after a NICU stay. We invite everyone interested in newborn care to explore Neopedia.org, take the survey, and share it within their network. Help us better inform and empower NICU families!

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ERS PRE-CONGRESS WEBINAR

Co-Creation and Meaningful Partnerships in Respiratory Research

As part of the ERS pre-Congress webinar series, BronQ Family was featured in a session on meaningful co-creation and patient-professional partnership in respiratory research. BronQ Family is an international research project exploring the long-term impact of bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD) on children born preterm and their families. During the webinar, Dr. Christina Tischer and Dr. Sylvia Obermann presented the project and highlighted how patients, parents, healthcare professionals, and researchers work together to shape research that matters.

Learn more about the project and stay tuned for upcoming results.

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Network

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KANGAROO MOTHER CARE

From Skin-to-Skin Hours to Shared Learning Across Borders

ARNIS, GFCNI's partner parent organization in Romania, brought together 11 neonatal units from eight hospitals for its 2026 Kangaroo Care Competition. Over 30 days, 133 healthcare professionals supported 121 parents, including 34 fathers, in providing 1,473.5 hours of skin-to-skin contact to 98 preterm or medically vulnerable newborns. The initiative promotes Kangaroo Mother Care as a routine part of infant- and family-centered developmental neonatal care while encouraging collaboration among clinical teams. As their prize, the two winning neonatal units from Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest joined a study visit to the Neonatal Unit in Modena, Italy, to explore NIDCAP and Family Integrated Care in practice.

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BREASTFEEDING CARE

Poland Strengthens Breastfeeding Support from Birth to Follow-Up

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In time with World Breastfeeding Week in August, a new bulletin from the Polish Committee for the Promotion of Breastfeeding highlights recent advances in lactation support, neonatal nutrition, and Baby-Friendly hospital care. At its center is Poland's updated perinatal care standard, which strengthens skin-to-skin contact, early breastfeeding, professional lactation support, and continuity of care after discharge. The bulletin also addresses human milk nutrition for preterm infants, breastfeeding after cesarean birth, and support in complex medical situations. Together, these contributions show how clear standards and well-trained teams can improve care for mothers and newborns.

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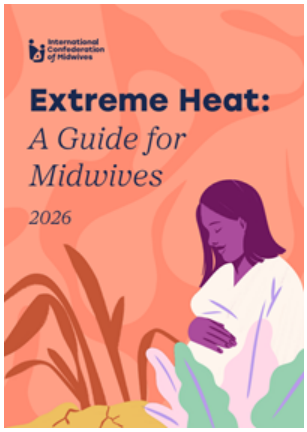

© International Confederation of Midwives

HEAT PREPAREDNESS

When Heat Becomes a Clinical Risk: New Guidance for Midwives

Extreme heat is an increasing threat to maternal and newborn health – and to the professionals and facilities providing care. Published in July by the International Confederation of Midwives, this new guide translates emerging evidence into practical, adaptable measures for midwives, educators, and health systems. It covers risks throughout pregnancy, labor, birth, the postnatal period, and newborn care, while also addressing air pollution, perinatal mental health, staff safety, and medicine cold chains. Low-cost adaptation actions and quick-reference tables support early recognition of heat-related illness, appropriate cooling and hydration, and safer clinical practice during heatwaves.

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UNIFYING NEONATAL CARE

Spain Starts Implementing New Law on Newborn Screening

Spain's recent enactment of Law 3/2026 on Newborn Screening, effective August 1, aims to mitigate regional disparities and improve equitable access to early diagnosis throughout the country. Under the new law, the national newborn screening program must now be reviewed at least once a year, and the list of conditions screened for will be updated regularly to reflect new evidence, technologies, and advances in diagnosis and treatment. The Spanish government has a 12 months to revise the National Population Screening Framework

Document, which will help align screening programs across Spain with a new unified standard. FEDER (the Spanish Federation of Rare Diseases) describes the law as the first step toward ensuring that access to early diagnosis is not affected by one's place of birth, particularly for rare diseases.

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Science

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OXYGEN STABILITY

Could Longer Caffeine Therapy Help Preterm Infants Breathe More Steadily?

Intermittent hypoxia can continue in preterm infants even after routine caffeine therapy ends. In this multicenter randomized clinical trial from 16 U.S. hospitals, researchers studied 160 infants born at or before 30 weeks and 6 days of gestation who no longer needed respiratory support. Infants who received extended caffeine therapy until about 43 weeks' postmenstrual age had fewer intermittent hypoxia episodes from 34 through 41 weeks than those receiving placebo. The caffeine group also showed a greater reduction in one inflammatory marker, required supplemental oxygen less often after randomization, and left the hospital sooner. Larger studies are needed to assess long-term outcomes.

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PREGNANCY CARE

Fibroids in Pregnancy: When Common Findings Need Closer Attention

Uterine fibroids are common in pregnancy, and most affected women have uncomplicated pregnancies. This narrative review summarizes current evidence on risks, monitoring, treatment, birth planning, and postpartum care for women with fibroids. The authors note that complications are more likely when fibroids are multiple, larger than 5 cm, or located in the lower uterine segment. These factors may increase the risk of preterm birth, fetal malpresentation, placental complications, cesarean birth, and postpartum hemorrhage. Even so, most women can have a vaginal birth, and conservative management remains appropriate in most cases. Individualized care, guided by symptoms and fibroid characteristics, supports safe pregnancy management.

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European Standards of Care for Newborn Health

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GROWTH MEASURES

Why Weight Gain Alone Does Not Tell the Full Growth Story

Growth assessment plays an essential role in neonatal nutritional care, yet studies often measure and report growth in preterm infants in different ways. This commentary, based on findings from a systematic review and meta-analysis on protein intake in preterm infants receiving fortified human milk, highlights why this matters. While higher protein intake was associated with greater weight gain, it showed little effect on length growth and no improvement in head circumference growth. The authors argue that weight gain alone should not define healthy growth. More standardized measures, including longer term outcomes such as neurodevelopment, could strengthen research and help neonatal teams make more informed care decisions.

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