

The Experiences of Fathers in Alberta Family Integrated Care (FICare™)



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Land Acknowledgement

I respectfully acknowledge that I live and work on Treaty 6 territory, the traditional lands of the Metis, Nêhiyaw-Askiy (Plains Cree), and Niitsítpiis-stahkoiî (Blackfoot/Niitsitapi) peoples

Learning Objectives

- 1. Identify barriers of positive experiences of fathers in the NICU
- 2. Describe 3 ways FICare may improve the experiences of fathers in the NICU
- 3. Discuss future practice implications and potential for further research

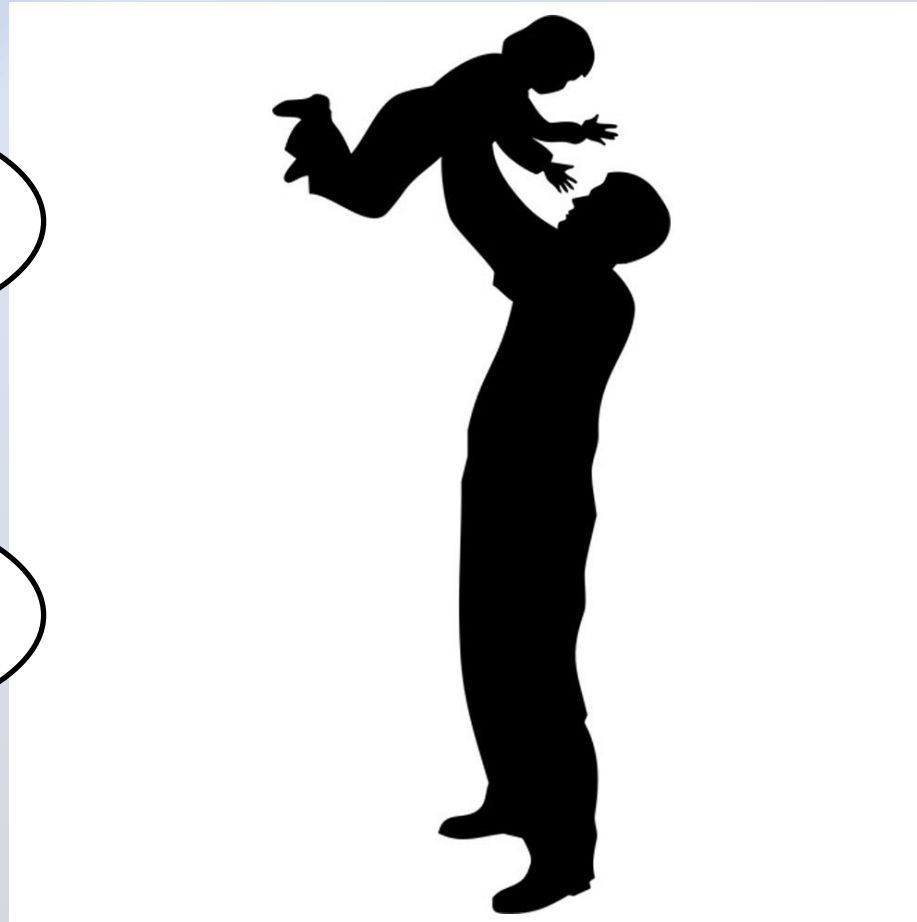
Outline

- Review of the literature on fathers
- Research question
- Research methodology
- Findings
- Conclusions
- Future directions

Fathers and Parenthood

Fear,
excitement,
joy

Establish an
immediate
bond



Antenatal shut-
out

Lack skills and
knowledge

Work-life
balance

Changing
relationship
with partner

Struggling to
find a role

Fathers and Infant Development

Heightened,
arousing,
playful

Engagement,
involvement,
cohabitation

Security as
parent and
partner



Photo credit: Amy Shafey

Lower odds of
behavioral
problems

Enhanced
cognitive
development

Infants with
medical risk

Impact of the NICU

- Traumatic childbirth: ‘fear, helplessness, horror’
- Lack of control
- Overseers, protectors, earners
- Fear of doing harm through physical interactions
- Feeling a lack of information exclusive to them but needing information to gain control
- Isolation – mothers take precedence
- Post-discharge parenting competence and confidence

Review of the Literature

- Infants born 32^{0/7}- 34^{6/7} weeks gestational age (GA)
- Generalizability
- Lack of definitions – ‘involvement, engagement’
- Study of interventions that integrate all components shown to be beneficial to fathers
 - Physical contact
 - Caregiving
 - Education

Alberta **FiCare**[™] Model

Alberta **FiCare**[™] was
*designed for the Alberta
context upon the advice of
Alberta health care
providers.*

Strategies

Tools

RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Negotiating parent-provider roles
Family integrated bedside rounds
Commendations

PARENT SUPPORT

Psychosocial support
Parent Journals
Family Mentors
Parking Passes
Postnatal depression
screening

PARENT EDUCATION

Individual bedside teaching
with Parent Education
Pathway
Group Education
Life's Little Love app



Research Question

What are the experiences of fathers of preterm infants born at 32^{0/7}- 34^{6/7} weeks GA admitted to a Level II NICU and enrolled in a cluster randomized controlled trial (cRCT) evaluating Alberta **FI**Care™?



cRCT 10 Level II NICU sites across Alberta

Sites randomized to Alberta **FiCare™** or standard care

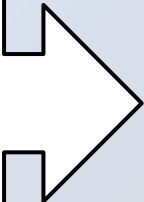
Infants born 32^{0/7}-34^{6/7} weeks GA

Caregiver present 6 hours/day

Group education and support from nursing

Journal entries

2 months
CGA
Newsletter
Phone



Biological father of infant whose mother was enrolled in Alberta **FiCare™** cRCT

Spoke English

Non-traditional parental 

Palliative care, severe congenital anomalies, apprehended 

Purposive sampling 

Demographic information

Semi-structured interview



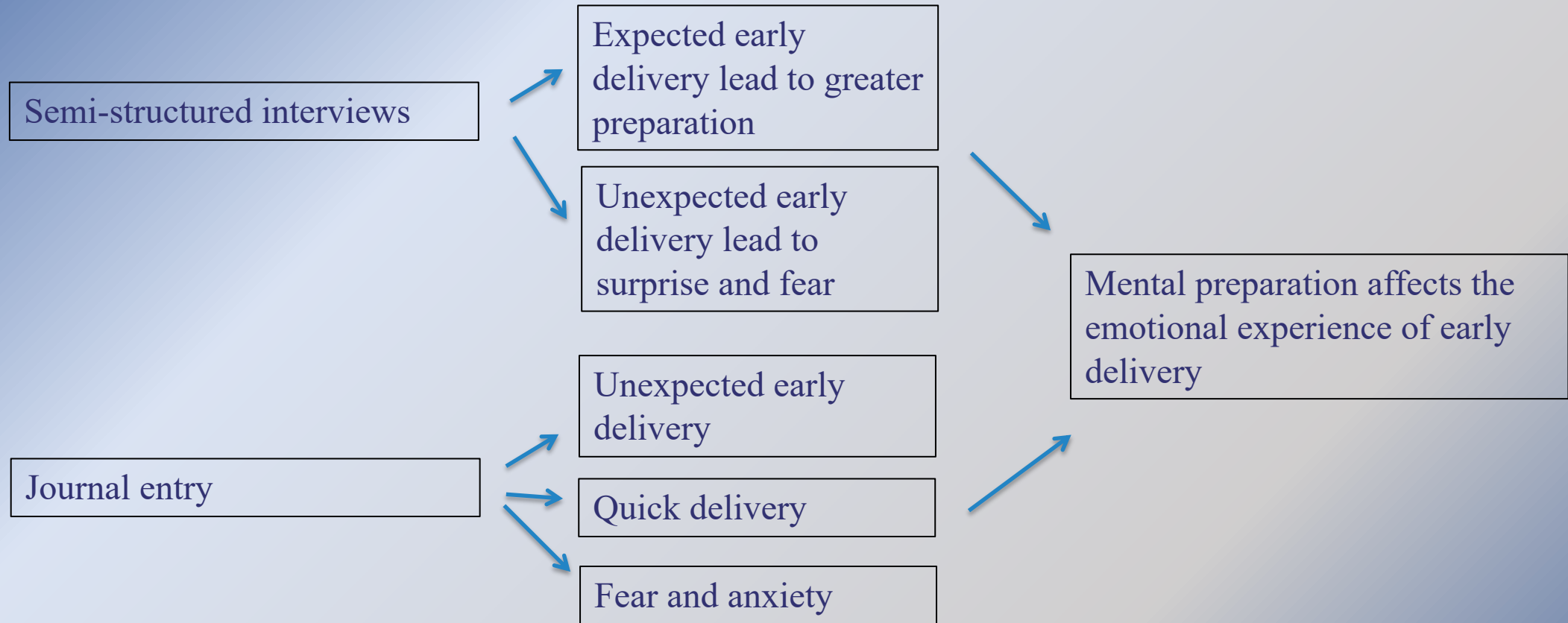
Journal entry

Findings

Demographics

	Alberta FICare™ (N = 9)	Standard care (N = 4)
Age, mean (SD)	35.2 (3.5)	41.5 (11.7)
Marital Status		
Married, n (%)	8 (89)	3 (75)
Common-Law, n (%)	0 (0)	1 (25)
Divorced, n (%)	1 (11)	0 (0)
Number of children		
1, n (%)	3 (33)	1 (25)
2, n (%)	4 (44)	3 (75)
3, n (%)	2 (22)	0 (0)
Gestational age, mean (SD)	34.0 (0.9)	33.1 (0.8)
Employed, n (%)	9 (100)	4 (100)
Income		
60-80,000, n (%)	2 (22.2)	0 (0)
>80,000, n (%)	7 (77.8)	4 (100)

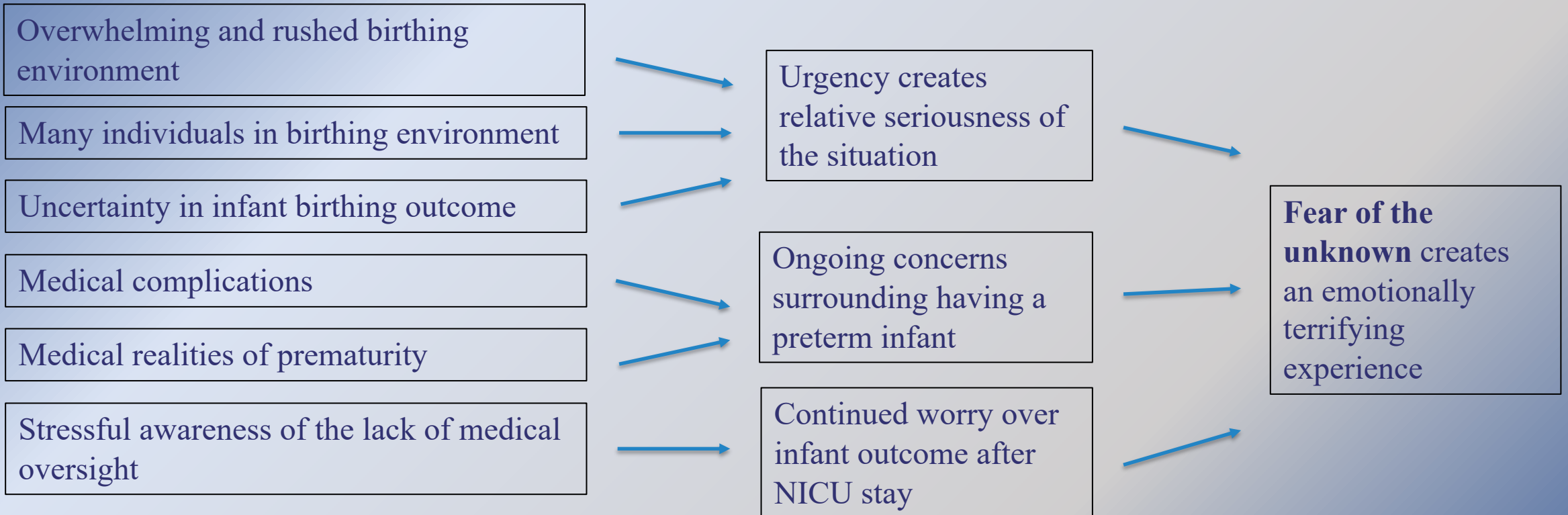
Triangulation



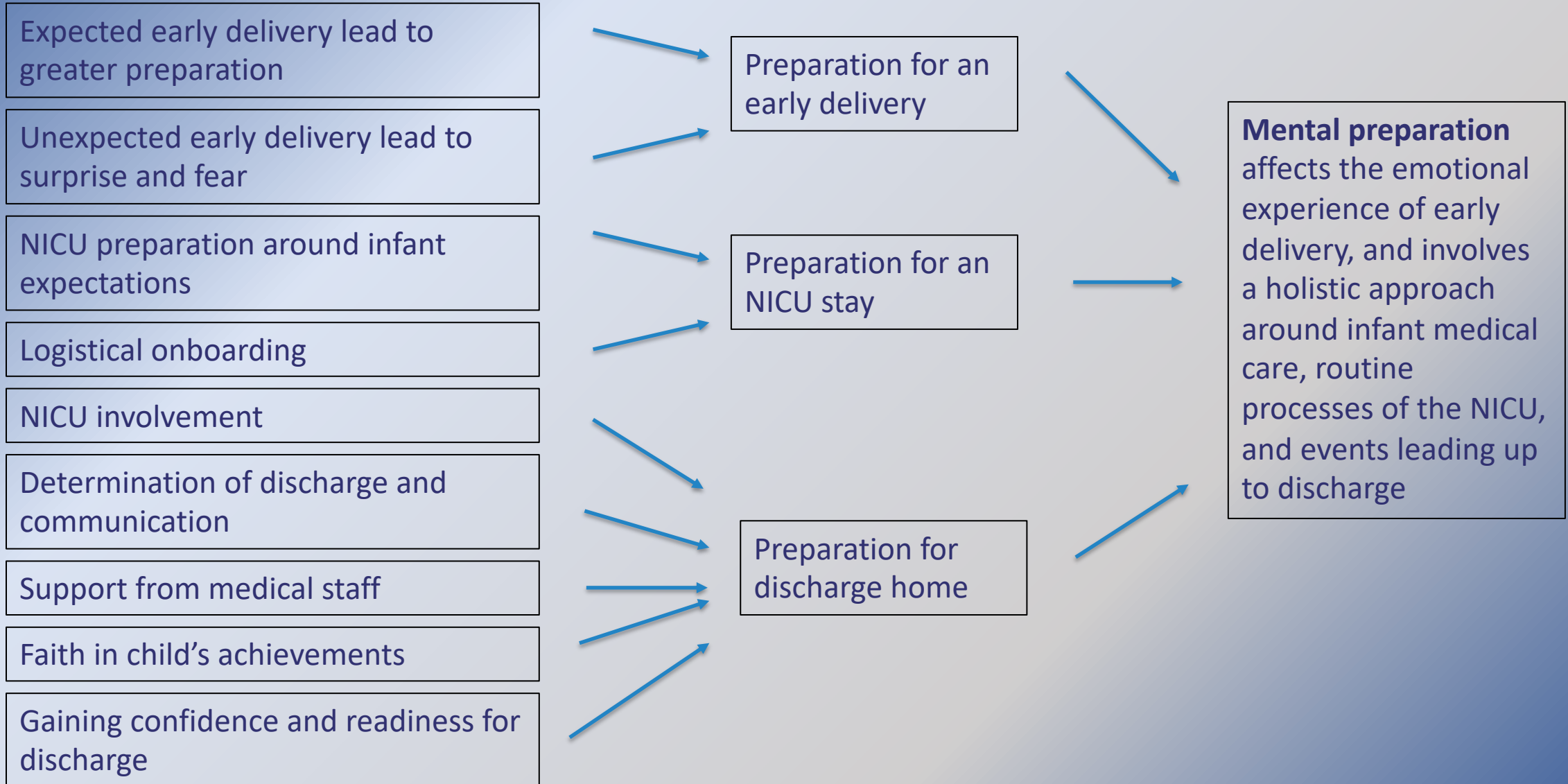
Generated Themes

- Fear of the unknown
- Mental preparation
- Identifying the fathers' role
- Parenting with supervision
- Effective communication
- Post-NICU transition
- Family life

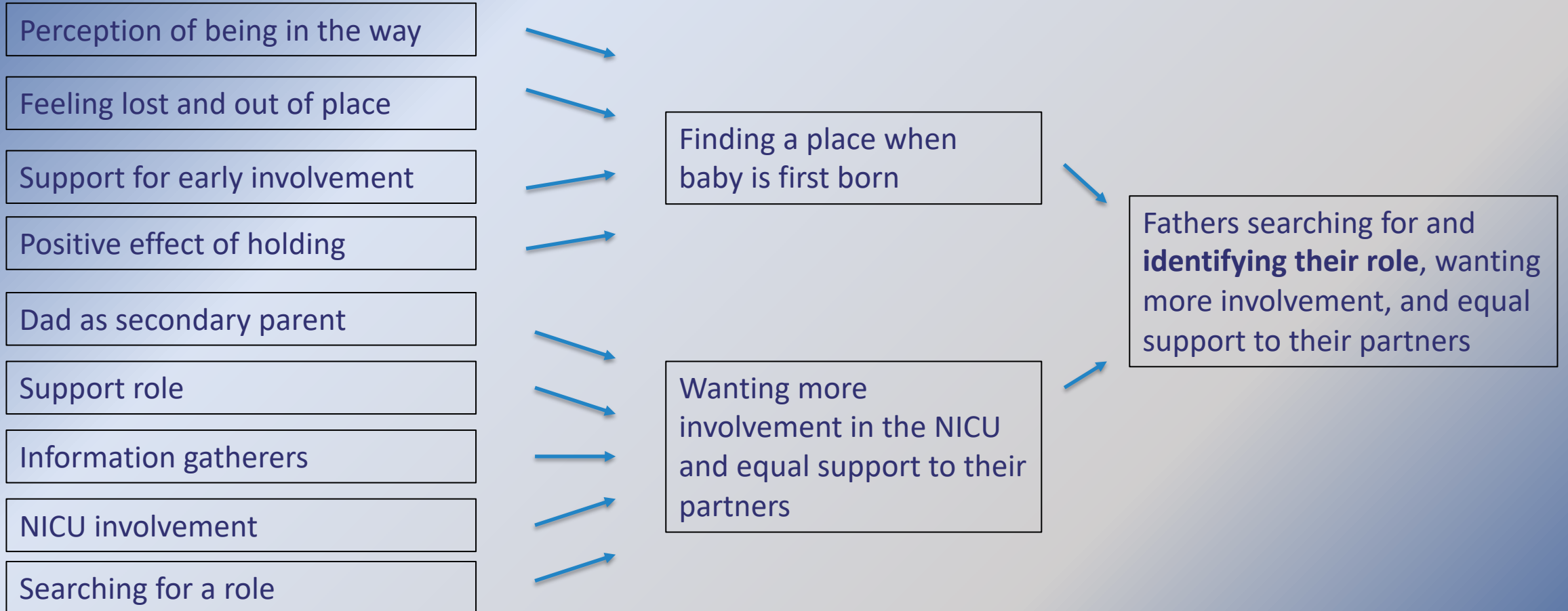
Fear of the Unknown



Mental Preparation



Identifying the Father's Role



Parenting with Supervision

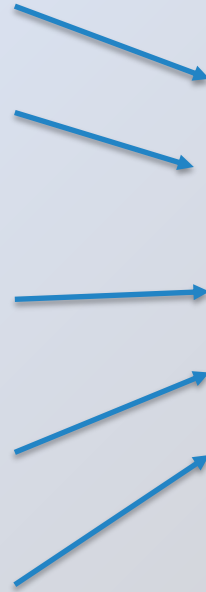
Encouraged involvement as a positive

Supported independence increased comfort and reduced anxiety

Inclusive environment and nursing attention

Needing permission to parent and wanting more independence

Physical environment



Fathers' support and benefit from **parenting with supervision** in a positive NICU environment that encourages parental independence

Effect of Alberta **FI**Care™ : Standard Care Group

*“That first little bit was a **little bit tough to kind of find what the proper routine should be**. Cause at the same time we want to be there but there’s also you know when he was feeding on the feeding tube all the time there’s not, **other than holding him there’s not much we can do**. And some of the nurses kind of made it seem like it was an **inconvenience** for them to bring him out of the isolette to allow us to hold him. Other nurses were a lot more easy about it and definitely encouraged it. So we were trying to balance out. Are we interfering with them? I know they have a busy schedule and lots of babies to look after versus wanting the care and be there for our child.”*

(Interview 4)

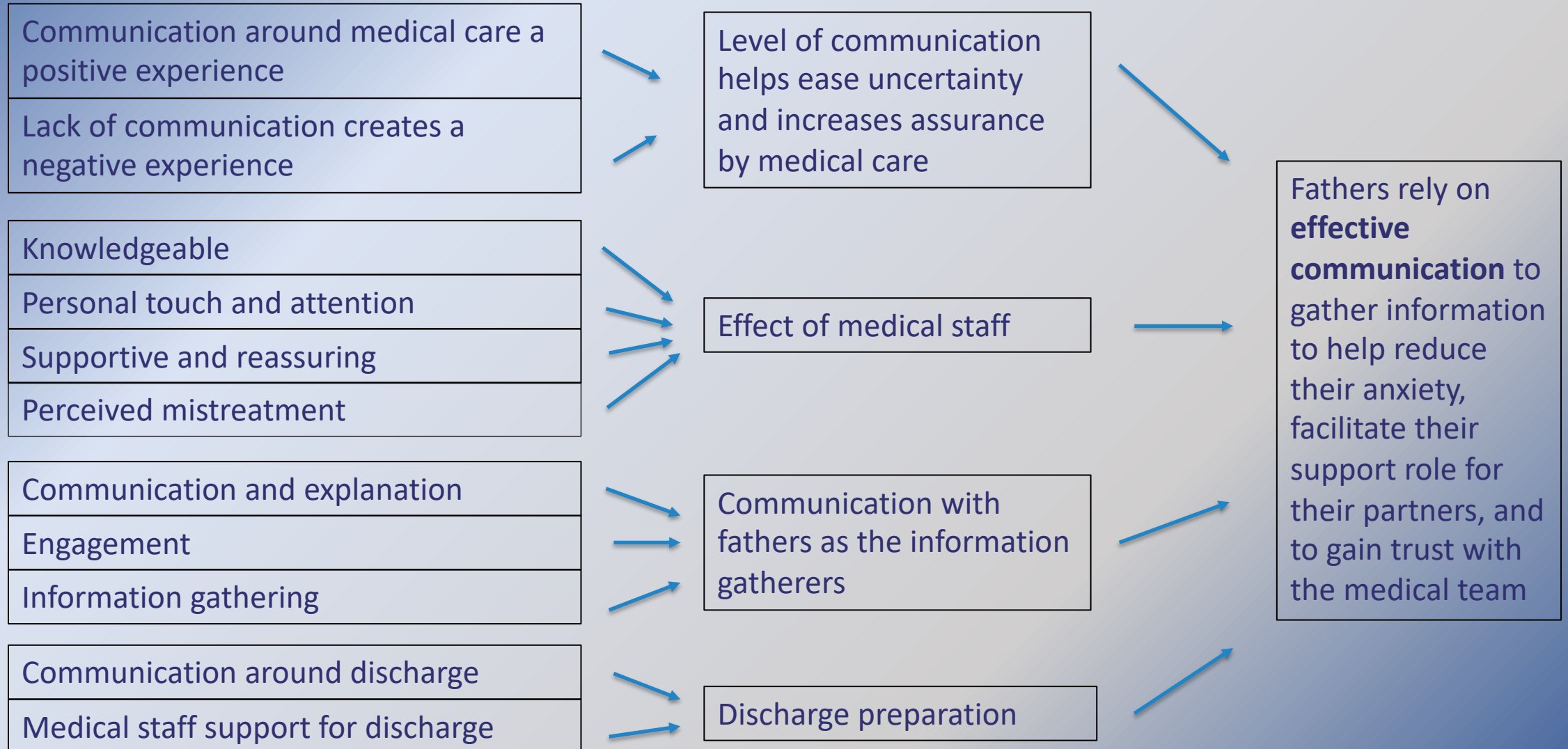
Effect of Alberta FICare™ : Intervention Group

“The ability that we had [to] be a little bit closer with a couple of the nurses. Because they would come and you know, check on him specifically and take more of a ... interest ... because of the FICare program. They wanted to follow up and different things like that. So, umm, given that – if we were in the same situation again, for sure we would absolutely sign up again.”
(Interview 8)

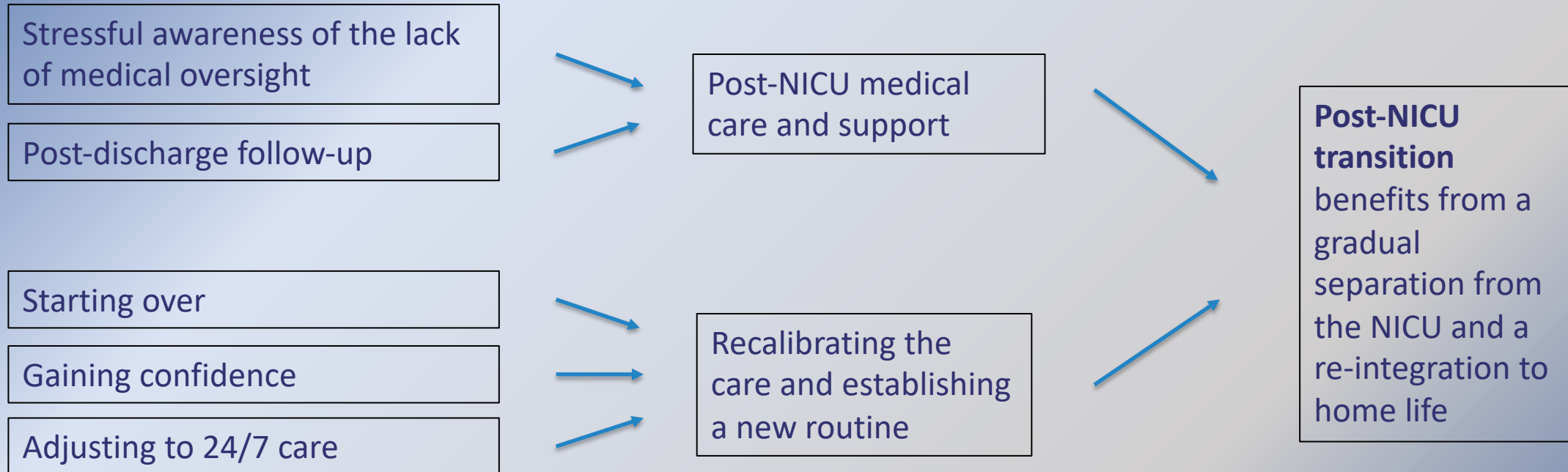
*“My nurses were just, they were all up front with everything that it was. If we needed something, we’d go get it. If you need this, you go get it....It helped speed up. It, it was good...We were basically **parenting, with supervision**. For, nine days, while we got ready to go home.”* (Interview 7)

*“We are **starting to get comfortable picking the twins up now without relying on the nurses to pass them off to us**. This was a big step since we were hesitant.”* (Interview 609)

Effective Communication



Post-NICU Transition



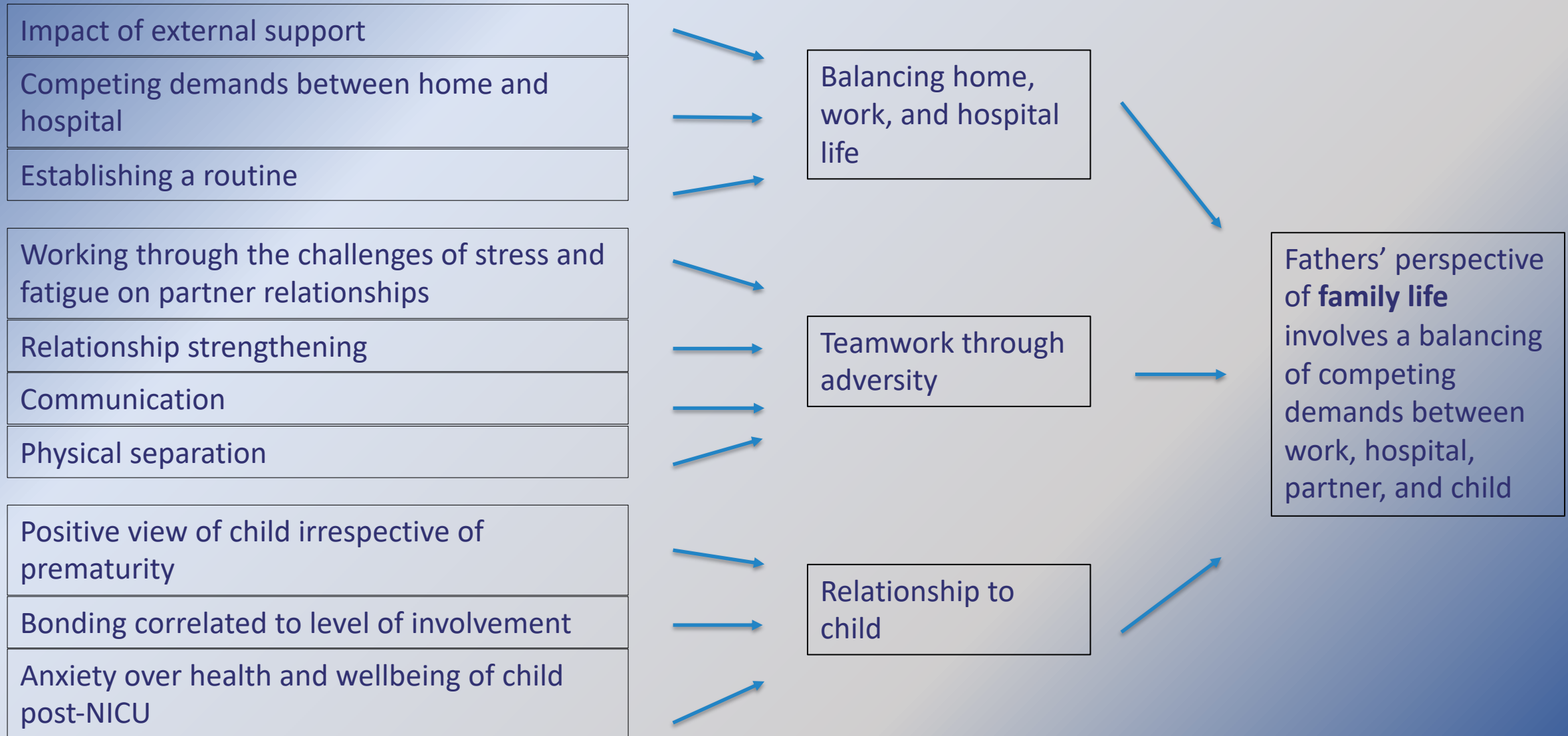
Effect of Alberta **FI**Care™ : Intervention Group

*“But once we got home ... the transition was natural. ... because of the, you know the encouragement for kangaroo care and feeding and changing and doing regular things with him, **he didn't feel like a stranger** by any means when we got home. You know, and he was our son, so I think there was a lot of positive stuff that happened at the NICU that helped with that transition.” (Interview 8)*

Effect of Alberta **FI**Care™ : Standard Care Group

*“So it was probably like about a month and we kind of got into a good rhythm. Its like all those things like. Double checking car seats. Just **not having the confidence** yet like lets feel the bath water right.” (Interview 3)*

Family Life



Conclusions

- Fathers of preterm infants born between 32^{0/7} to 34^{6/7} weeks GA enter the NICU *with heightened levels of stress, uncertainty, and fear with little expectation of the NICU environment*
- Fathers gain confidence when they feel supported, are involved, and are communicated with
- The *positive effect carries over post-discharge*
- Fathers in the Alberta **FI**Care™ group attributed their confidence and positive NICU experience to Alberta **FI**Care™

Future Directions

- Father-specific programs
 - Aimed to reduce stress and anxiety
 - Increase their involvement with their infants
 - Communication with health professionals
- Post-NICU follow-up process to help with the transition home

Acknowledgements

- **Families of moderate and late preterm infants**
- Drs. Vibhuti Shah, Karen Benzies, Reshma Amin and Tom Stelfox
- Alberta Innovates-PRIHS (cluster RCT, 2-month follow-up)
- AHS/Covenant Health Directors, Executive Directors, Patient Care Managers, and Super-Users
- Maternal Newborn Child and Youth (MNCY) and Critical Care Strategic Clinical Networks (SCN)
- Pilar Zanoni, Project Manager
- Jana Kurilova, Data Management
- Corrinne Wilson, Transcriptionist
- Many Research Assistants
- My kids



Questions