Is there enough information on SIDS in Alaska?
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ABSTRACT
The rate of SIDS in Alaska is about two times the national average, and even more prevalent among Alaskan natives. In this research project I wanted to ask what kind, and how much information is provided to new parents on SIDS in interior Alaska? The purpose of my study was to see if healthcare providers from a wide range of specialties, but all dealing with birth, had provided their patients with the same or differing information on SIDS in Alaska. I went to multiple healthcare providers and interviewed them, asking what kind of information they provided to the new parents. I obtained varying answers from a standardized packet on SIDS, to no information provided for new parents at all.

I believe that this huge discrepancy in information, can and does play a role in the incidence of SIDS in Alaska. Ultimately I would like to further research the cases of SIDS and see what types of healthcare providers were used for pre/neonatal care and see if in fact there is a correlation among the types of information provided.

OBJECTIVES
The objectives for my research were to see what types of information are given to new parents on SIDS, and if this information is uniformly distributed from different health care professionals in the interior of Alaska. The purpose is to see if there is in fact a correlation between the information given and the incident rate of SIDS in Alaska. If in fact a link is found I would like to further this research and look at past records of SIDS cases in Alaska and see what type of healthcare provider they were seeing.

MATERIALS & METHODS
The individuals of interest for this study were Interior Alaska based healthcare professionals who provide daily pre/neonatal care for patients. The sample size used were 5 different healthcare providers, each coming from a different background in occupation. I scheduled interviews with each of the healthcare providers. During the interview process I would ask a standardized set of questions not specific to any one healthcare field. The questions were,
- What information do you provide to new parents on SIDS?
- What birthing/post-natal classes do you recommend?
- What kind of follow up care do you provide for patients?
- What do you know about SIDS in Alaska?

The answers were gathered and processed, revealing a large discrepancy among the types and amounts of information given to new parents.

RESULTS
There were 5 different healthcare specialties interviewed. One doctor that works in a hospital setting, 1 mid-wife in a natural birthing clinic, a naturopathic doctor, a PA in a clinical setting, and an ANP in a clinical setting.

The Doctor, PA, and ANP all had the same answers. There is a standardized packet that is handed out to new or expecting mother's. This packet includes information on the “Back to Sleep” campaign, which is a universally accepted practice in neonatal healthcare. The packet also included information about birthing classes, and a pamphlet outlining specific precautionary measures to take.

They also provide if requested, post birth check ups at the patients home. Overall these healthcare professionals had a very complete and thorough source of information for the parents.

The mid-wifes gives her patients information on the back to sleep campaign, along with information such as not to smoke or drink during pregnancy. She does not provide post birth check ups, or provide the parents information on a pre-post birth clinic.

The naturopathic doctor provides information on the back to sleep campaign, along with other information regarding sleeping space, not to bed share, and not to have overly soft bedding. The child should have a firmer sleeping area in order to prevent suffocation.

All of the healthcare providers generally had the same answer with respect to SIDS in Alaska, being that SIDS rates in Alaska are higher than the national average, and that among Alaskan natives the rates are even higher yet.

CONCLUSIONS
This research has brought to light some discrepancies regarding the information provided by different healthcare providers in the interior Alaska region. It seems that parents who go to a traditional hospital or clinical setting get a very standardized and complete packet on SIDS prevention. The natural birthing clinics are on board with the back to sleep program, but fail short with regards to any additional materials provided, such as packets or pamphlets on SIDS prevention in Alaska. It is important to note that I received the similar answers from both natural birthing practitioners, stating in short that “they only provided information on SIDS to new parents if the parents ask about SIDS.” It is not part of their “standard” practice with regards to providing information to new parents.

I believe that simply standardizing the information given to new parents through all health fields would be a step in the right direction in SIDS prevention. It shouldn’t be something that the parents have to bring up, it should be an absolute requirement of each and every healthcare professional, not only in Alaska but everywhere, to provide new parents with information on SIDS and SIDS prevention. I will be doing further research regarding the information on SIDS in Alaska, and hope to play a role in standardizing the information that is given to new parents on SIDS prevention.

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