



## The prevalence of PTSD of parents of infants admitted to NICU: a systematic review

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### PURPOSE:

The admission of an infant to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) is a stressful experience for parents. A proportion of parents may develop significant stress, with some meeting the DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Evidence suggests the NICU experience is associated with significant adverse effects on the parent and child well beyond infancy. This review aims to focus on studies that examine the prevalence of PTSD of parents of high-risk infants following the admission to the NICU, where the index trauma is described as the NICU experience.

### METHOD:

This systematic review was conducted using the PRISMA-P: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols. We searched PsycINFO, PubMed, Scopus, EMBASE, Web of Science, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses databases, and reference lists of included articles (1980-2021).

### RESULTS:

This review identified nine different screening tools to assess PTSD across 25 studies with only six of the studies meeting the clinical cut-off criteria for probable PTSD with the NICU experience as the index trauma. The overall prevalence of parents that met clinical cut-off criteria for PTSD was as high as 33%. This suggests that screening parents during the hospital admission and at follow-up clinics is indicated in the NICU.

### CONCLUSIONS:

Parents of high-risk infants admitted to the NICU may benefit from early screening and referral for further evaluation by a trained mental health professional.

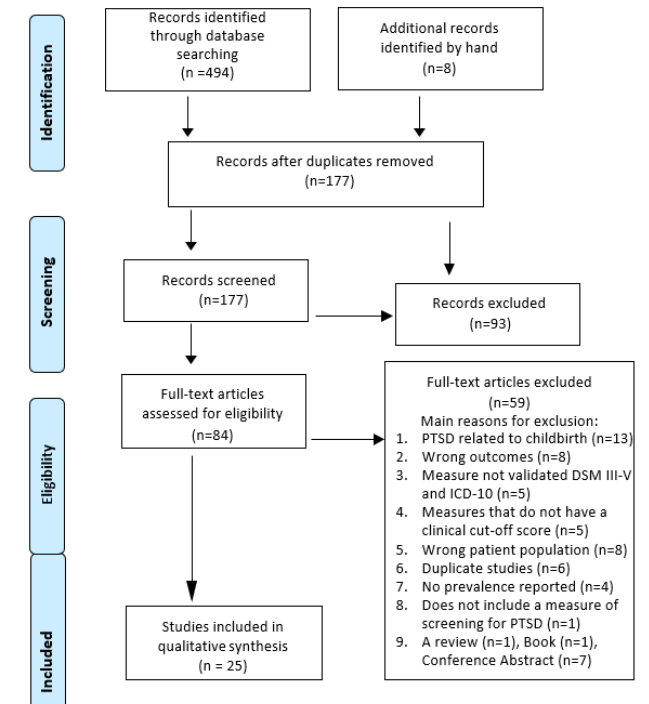


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram