

FaceTime on iPad Allows For Mother-Newborn Connection

Applications like Skype or GoToMeeting, that allow you to connect face-to-face with a far-off friend or colleague, have become ubiquitous in recent years. Being able to see who you are speaking to, and them having the ability to see you as well, is vital in the building of a meaningful relationship. Granted, virtual meetings are not as personal as actually being face-to-face, but they can be more engaging than simple voice- or text-based communication, right? Now imagine you are the mother of a premature newborn, and despite your overwhelming desire to interact with your baby, you are bedridden yourself for much of the day, and thus unable to have the face-to-face connection that's so important in the first few days of life. How wonderful would it be to see and talk to your baby with an iPad?

Cedars Sinai hospital in Los Angeles had this brilliant idea, and thanks to the wonders of modern technology, and an assist from Pocket for iPad, new moms are now able to do exactly that. The hospital's objective was to allow mothers who are still recovering from delivery and unable to frequently visit the NICU the opportunity to see and talk to their babies via the FaceTime function on an iPad. From the remote location of a mother's own hospital room she can converse with her child's nurse, or simply talk, so that her newborn can be comforted by her familiar voice.

An immensely satisfying, yet relatively simple experience was created for those new mothers using easily accessible technology – it's amazing what a little creativity can do to turn a stressful situation into a comforting one.

This simple, technology-enhanced connection becomes even more vital in the instance when the mother is discharged to go home, but her baby has to stay for many weeks or even months after that. Steelcase Health Product Manager Robin Polavin had an experience similar to this with one of her kids: "My daughter was born 10 weeks early and spent 32 days in the NICU. 28 of those 32 days I spent 45 minutes away from her hospital. While we made the trip each day for several hours, having the option to Face Time with her while I was at home would have been an incredible blessing. It would certainly have eased my anxiety."

For rural families living a distance from their hospital, the ability to use FaceTime on an iPad at home and connect with an iPad at the hospital creates a human connection that was very expensive before, but is now within reach. Margaret Alritz, Steelcase Health's Director of Healthcare Strategy, says, "Healthcare often thinks of technology in terms of large, anonymous back-end data management systems or medical devices for treatment and research. But we are also starting to see the ways in which the ubiquity of IT communication systems can be leveraged at the human scale of person-to-person connection. This is not about robots replacing doctors; **this is about technology bringing people together and making our experiences more human.**"

Technology is many times accused of taking the 'human' factor out of an experience, but in cases such as the one described above, where it connects a new mother to her newborn and her caregiver, it is positively enhancing the human connection in a very meaningful way.

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