Kangaroo care leaps ahead at The Rosie!

Staff and families at the Rosie Hospital’s neonatal intensive care unit are taking part in a two week programme called a kangaroo-a-thon. They hope to highlight the practice of kangaroo care and positive touch and promote the various benefits of it.

The programme started on Monday 07 May and ran to Sunday 20 May with today (15 May) being International Kangaroo Care Awareness day. The total hours will be documented and submitted to Sunnybrooke Hospital in Toronto, Canada, which is collecting hours from neonatal units from all over the world.

Kangaroo care is skin-to-skin contact between a baby and their parent, carer or sibling where the baby is nestled on their chest. It provides a number of benefits:
- Regulates a baby’s temperature, heart rate and breathing.
- Aids digestion, weight gain and growth and allows a natural progression to breastfeeding.
- Encourages deep and longer sleep, meaning they will also have more periods of alert wakefulness
- Releases the feel-good hormone oxytocin into the mother’s and baby’s bloodstream, reducing stress and anxiety.
- Releases the milk making hormone Prolactin in mothers

Parents and staff can also use a technique known as ‘positive touch’ for babies not ready to leave the incubator. This technique helps parents to communicate their love and reassurance to their baby, and can counterbalance the uncomfortable touch of necessary medical procedures. It also has similar benefits as kangaroo care for both parent and baby.

Kelly Spike, Clinical Nurse Specialist in the NICU said: “This contact between baby and parent helps to build a loving relationship which has many life-long benefits and can even have a positive impact on their baby’s brain development. These benefits aren’t limited to babies born prematurely but also for babies born at term, whether or not they require a NICU stay.”

Lucy Kemshell’s daughter, Sophie, was born at 25 weeks at the Rosie. She said: “Kangaroo care gave me a role in helping Sophie to grow and develop. It helped us to bond, and make up for the time that we had been separated. I could hold my baby and know that what I was doing was a necessity for her health and wellbeing, as well as mine.”