

# **Exploring countertransference in psychoanalytic research: Reflecting on being a researcher, a psychotherapist, a mother and a human being in a neonatal high care unit**

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## **Abstract**

This paper offers insights into the process of conducting psychoanalytically oriented research in a neonatal high care unit with premature infants and their mothers. The paper emphasises how evocative and emotional the experience of conducting an ethnographic study with traumatised mother-baby dyads can be. The importance of constantly scrutinising the counter-transferential responses, thoughts and feelings induced in the researcher is emphasised. Case illustrations highlight how a reflexive exploration of these reactions resulted in crucial insights about the experience of prematurity. The 'lived experience' of anguish, pain and overwhelm allowed a profound sense of understanding and respect for what premature infants and their mothers need to endure. The challenges inherent in navigating the overlapping roles of researcher, psychotherapist, mother, and human being are also addressed.