Parent participation in the nursing process significantly contributes to the overall wellbeing of a newborn and the whole family. It is important to ensure that nurses, who take care of newborns and collaborate with their family members, are well-acquainted with the influence that an infant’s illness and critical condition as well as the stress have on the functioning of a family unit.

The aim To compare parents’ and nurses’ perceptions of parents needs in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

The study was conducted in Kaunas University Hospital NICU. The sample consisted of 181 parents and 37 nurses. The NICU Family Needs Inventory was used for data collection. The instrument included five following subscales of needs: proximity, information, assurance, support and comfort. Reliability of the scale was identified as 0.94 using Cronbach’s α.

The parents’ needs perceived by both groups were compared within the subscales. Using Mann’o-Whitney rank test the significant differences between the parents’ and nurses’ assessments of individual statements were identified. The majority of statistically significant differences between parents and nurses have been found in case of assessment of proximity (75.0%) and informational (72.7%) needs related to the possibility for parents to be close to their newborn and to receive timely and adequate information about their newborn’s health condition. Parents, if compared to nurses, assessed these needs as more important. The assessment of support needs showed the lowest number of differences (38.9%). There was a statistically significant difference in case of the decision making needs related to the newborn care that parents identified as being more important. Nurses perceived as being more important the needs related to parent-to-parent support and possibility to share feelings.

The comparison of parents and nurses perceptions of parents needs in NICU showed that there are statistically significant differences of individual statements assessment within the all five subscales.

Conclusions This study shows that infants have different early warning signs of physiological instability. However this instability can be expressed in a risk score, which might predict the chance that the infants are re-admitted to the NICU. The NICU may thus decide to not discharge the infant for a few more days. Further research on the utilisation of the risk score is needed.