Stanford



Malathi Balasundaram

Clinical Professor, Pediatrics - Neonatology

CLINICAL OFFICE (PRIMARY)

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Bio

BIO

Dr. Balasundaram finished her fellowship at the University of California San Diego and joined the Stanford neonatology group in 2015. She is the El Camino Health NICU Family-Centered Care committee chair and actively leads different subcommittees to improve NICU quality goals. Her passion is to provide safe and quality neonatal care in a family-integrated NICU in her local NICU and other NICUs. She formed the International FCC Taskforce, partnering with the American Academy of Pediatrics - Trainees and Early Career Neonatologists (TECaN) by recruiting passionate trainees, neonatologists, staff, and family partners. The FCC Taskforce stands as a pioneering force, being the FIRST international, multicenter, collaborative initiative solely dedicated to quality improvement in family-centered care. She received the 2022 David Wirtschafter Award for building a comprehensive family-centered program. The award is given to individual leaders or NICU quality improvement teams whose contributions impact their unit and the larger neonatal community by the California Perinatal Quality Care Collaborative (CPQCC) and the California Association of Neonatologists (CAN). She has been the statewide CPQCC and a Perinatal Quality Improvement Executive Panel (PQIP) volunteer member since the second year of her fellowship.

CLINICAL FOCUS

- NICU Family-Centered Care
- Neonatal quality improvement work
- Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine
- NICU Point Of Care Ultrasound (POCUS)
- Neonatal resuscitation
- Pediatrics, General

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Clinical Professor, Pediatrics - Neonatology
- Member, Maternal & Child Health Research Institute (MCHRI)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Honor Roll for Teaching, Stanford Pediatrics Residency Program (06/2024)
- Advocacy Award, Stanford School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics (06/2024)
- David Wirtschafter, CPQCC and the California Association of Neonatologists (2022)

BOARDS, ADVISORY COMMITTEES, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Chair, CPQCC Quality Infrastructure Committee (QII) (2022 - 2024)
- Quality Infrastructure Committee (QII) member, CPQCC (2014 - present)
- Founder & Co-Chair, Family-Centered Care Taskforce (2022 - present)
- Member, Planning Committee Member at Large, National Gravens Conference (2022 - present)
- Chair, Family-Centered Care Committee, El Camino Health (2016 - present)
- Member, NICU Partnership Council , El Camino Health (2016 - present)
- Member, PQIP Panel CPQCC (2016 - present)
- Physician Liaison, Transport Follow Up, El Camino Health NICU (2016 - present)
- Member, American Academy of Pediatrics (2004 - present)

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- Board Certification: Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine, American Board of Pediatrics (2016)
- Board Certification, Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine , American Board of Pediatrics (2016)
- Fellowship: University of California San Diego (2015) CA
- Board Certification: Pediatrics, American Board of Pediatrics (2007)
- Residency: St Joseph's Regional Medical Center (2007) NJ
- Medical Education: Government Chengalpattu College (2002) India

Research & Scholarship

CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

A Family-Centered Care (FCC) model in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) has been shown to reduce the length of NICU hospital stays for infants, improving neurobehavioral outcomes in preterm infants and increasing the likelihood of breastfeeding at discharge. Research shows that families of infants admitted to an FCC unit experience less stress than those admitted to a standard care unit. Unfortunately, FCC care model is lacking in many NICUs, and family integration is not routinely part of the standard of care. A lack of family involvement or inclusion in the NICU may exacerbate disparities in neonatal health outcomes across racial and ethnic lines.

Although FCC is beneficial for infants and families, implementation can be challenging because it involves a shift in the role of the healthcare provider from caregiver to mentor – but we know that when NICU staff and families collaborate, families are more involved in decision-making and are empowered to influence their infant's recovery. The FCC TaskForce aims to elevate the importance of family integration and empowerment in improving infant outcomes in NICUs across the United States and internationally. Health care professionals partnering with families with lived experience in the NICU, we are confident that we can increase family engagement and improve infant outcomes, particularly for marginalized families.

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **A Family-Inclusive Taskforce for Improving NICU Quality of Care.** *Pediatrics*
  Balasundaram, M., Kowalski, M., White, R., Malcolm, M., Sorrells, K., Day, C., Hedli, L. C.
  2026

- **Improving commitment to family-centered care in the NICU: a multicenter collaborative quality improvement project.** *Journal of perinatology : official journal of the California Perinatal Association*
  Balasundaram, M., Lee, H. C., Hedli, L. C., Machut, K. Z., Sivakumar, D., Kowalski, M., Mendelsohn, R., Sorrells, K., Day, C.
  2025

- **The Why and How of Family-Centered Care.** *NeoReviews*
  Urbina, T., Balasundaram, M., Coughlin, M., Sorrells, K., Toney-Noland, C., Day, C.
  2024; 25 (7): e393-e400

- **Understanding family-centered care in the NICU: a scoping review protocol.** *JBI evidence synthesis*
  Franco Fuenmayor, M. E., Fawcett, A., Schwartz, K. E., Horner, S., Balasundaram, M., Burke, B. L., Bean, K. A., Russell, L. N., Simonton, E., Machut, K. Z., Fry, J. T.
  2024

- **Family Perception of OpenNotes in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.** *Applied clinical informatics*
  McCallie, K., Balasundaram, M., Sarabu, C.
  2024

- **Implementation of a Bedside Point-of-Care Ultrasound Program in a Large Academic Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.** *American journal of perinatology*
  Pai, V. V., Noh, C. Y., Dasani, R., Vallandingham, S., Manipon, C., Haileselassie, B., Profit, J., Balasundaram, M., Davis, A. S., Bhombal, S.
  2022

- **Increasing early exposure to mother's own milk in premature newborns.** *Journal of perinatology : official journal of the California Perinatal Association*
  Balasundaram, M., Land, R., Miller, S., Profit, J., Porter, M., Arnold, C., Sivakumar, D.
  2022

- **A Clinical Monitoring Approach for Early Onset Sepsis: A Community Hospital Experience.** *Hospital pediatrics*
  Bain, L., Sivakumar, D., McCallie, K., Balasundaram, M., Frymoyer, A.
  1800

- **Increasing Parent Satisfaction With Discharge Planning: An Improvement Project Using Technology in a Level 3 NICU.** *Advances in neonatal care : official journal of the National Association of Neonatal Nurses*
  Balasundaram, M. n., Porter, M. n., Miller, S. n., Sivakumar, D. n., Fleming, A. n., McCallie, K. n.
  2021

- **Predictors of poor neonatal outcomes in prenatally diagnosed multicystic dysplastic kidney disease.** *Journal of perinatology : official journal of the California Perinatal Association*
  Balasundaram, M., Chock, V. Y., Wu, H. Y., Blumenfeld, Y. J., Hintz, S. R.
  2018