Implementation of Baby Massage and Parenting Workshop into High Risk Infant Follow-up Program: A Preliminary Service Review
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Introduction
Prematurity may cause neonatal complications and neurodevelopmental abnormalities. Massage, as a form of tactile stimulation, may activate the vagal afferent and efferent pathways in the parasympathetic control of cardiovascular and gastro-intestinal systems, resulting in the stabilization of infant’s heart rate, soothing of stress response, the promotion of gastric mobility and weight gain. Baby massage also helps mothers with postnatal depression. Physiotherapists have participated in the High Risk Follow-up Program in Princess Margaret Hospital since 1994. Besides the on-going neuro-developmental assessment and monitoring, a Baby Massage and Parenting (BMP) workshop has been implemented in the program since August 2014.

Objectives
It aims to promote healthy growth of premature babies, improve the harmony between parents and child, decrease postnatal anxiety of parents and introduce knowledge and techniques of parenting.

Methodology
Medically stabled premature babies under HRFP with corrected age of 10 months or less were invited to join the 2-houred workshop (video show and practical). Outcome measures were baby’s conditions of feeding, sleep, irritability, and parents’ concern of the baby’s future development, which were graded by parents via a 5-point scale in pre- and post-workshop questionnaires. Pre-questionnaires were done before the start of workshop. Post-questionnaires were collected on the following neuro-development assessment session. Moreover, parents’ subjective grading on the overall change in baby’s condition, self-anxious level and the workshop’s usefulness were collected.
RESULT

RESULTS AND OUTCOMES Seven babies (mean corrected age = 6.7 months) completed the workshop. Compliance rate of home massage was 100%. 57% of the babies had improvement in their sleep and irritability; 43% had improvement in feeding. 57% and 43% of the parents were less anxious about their babies’ neuro-development and the caring of babies respectively. 86% of the parents reported that the workshop was useful. CONCLUSION The BMP Workshop is beneficial to both parents and their premature babies. Parents have fewer difficulties feeding their babies. The babies sleep better and are less irritable. Parents are less nervous about the child’s neuro-development and are more confident in caring of the child. A data analysis with a larger sample size is warranted and objective finding such as the percentile of weight gain may also be taken into consideration.