



# DOCTORS' UNCERTAINTY ABOUT OUTCOMES FOR INFANTS WITH BIRTH INJURY

When babies are born with birth injuries, it is hard to predict what long-term outcomes will be. Doctors who work with these patients must try to predict outcomes but there is always doubt. Doubt is an ethical issue doctors address in daily life with patients.

**Reference:** Rasmussen, L.A., M.A. Cascio\*, A. Ferrand\*, M. Shevell, and E. Racine. E-Pub 19 December 2018. The Complexity of Physicians' Understanding and Management of Prognostic Uncertainty in Neonatal Hypoxic-Ischemic Encephalopathy. *Journal of Perinatology*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41372-018-0296-3>

## WHO SHOULD READ THIS?

People with an interest in birth injuries (especially neonatal hypoxic ischemic encephalopathy) might find this article useful. Doctors can compare their thoughts with the things said by doctors in this study. Patients and family members can learn about the point of view from the doctor's side.



## WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

It is about the way that twelve (12) doctors, neurologists and neonatologists, talk about uncertainty they face in their work with babies born with birth injuries.

## WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The researchers interviewed twelve (12) doctors about their thoughts and experiences with such babies. They analyzed the data using thematic content analysis, a method aimed at finding common themes in the way interview participants talk about this issue.



## WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

One of the themes the researchers found was uncertainty. Doctors talked about many sources of uncertainty including lack of knowledge or limits of knowledge in practice. Some doctors talked about facing uncertainty rather than avoiding it, which is different from some other literature about doctors' views on uncertainty.

## WHAT NOW?

Results from this research support efforts by doctors teaching and training medical students to talk openly about uncertainty and how to deal with it.

