Thanks to you, we have reached our goal of enrolling 181 preterm or low birth weight infants and their families into our study. Thank you for your continued participation; we are fortunate to have the opportunity to watch your infants grow!

This is the first issue of our newsletter. Now that enrollment is completed, we plan to update you about our research findings. In this issue, we will describe the characteristics of the participating infants and families and present a few initial findings from the research.

Last year we received funding from the University of Wisconsin to follow your children until they are 3 years old. When you come in for your child’s 2 year visit, we will ask you if you are interested in participating in the 3 year time point. In the long run, we are hoping to follow your children to school age. We will keep you posted!

Infants in the study experienced a range of health difficulties at birth and during their hospital stays. Most infants experienced breathing problems such as apnea or respiratory distress syndrome. Other infants experienced prolonged hospitalization, sepsis, and surgery. Many infants went home with an apnea monitor and some were discharged from the hospital with oxygen.

On average, the babies were born at 31 weeks gestation. Gestational ages ranged from 23 to 37 weeks.

Infants in the study had birth weights ranging from 490 grams to 3,328 grams. Their average weight at birth was 1,709 grams.
During the past 3 years, we enrolled infants and families from 3 hospitals in Wisconsin into our study. The participating hospitals were Meriter Hospital and St. Mary’s Hospital Medical Center in Madison and St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in Milwaukee. The percent of families from each hospital is shown in the figure above. Special thanks to the nurses who helped us enroll infants in each of the hospitals: Patricia Green-Sotos and Debbie Krumpus at Meriter; Sarah Gavigan at St. Mary’s; and Julie Gale at St. Joseph’s.

During each visit, you filled out questionnaires that provided us with information about your infant and your family. Some information we learned from the questionnaires includes:

-53% of the infants in the study are boys and 47% are girls.
-18% of the infants in the study are either twins or triplets.
-55% of the infants in the study are first born.
-At the hospital discharge visit, siblings of the preterm infants ranged in age from 9 months to 22 years.
-66% of the infants are Caucasian, 14% are African American, 2% are Latino, 1% are Asian, 1% are Middle Eastern, and 16% are multiracial.
-At the time of the infant’s birth, mothers’ ages ranged from 17 to 42 years and fathers’ ages ranged from 17 to 49 years. The average ages for mothers and fathers was between 30 and 31 years.
-Mothers received support from many different people in their lives, including the baby’s father, grandparents, aunts, uncles, babysitters, and older children.

Participant families come from many locations in central and southeastern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. The above map shows where participant families live. Families reside in a total of twenty-two counties, ranging from one family to eighty-one families per county.

The families in this study have between 1 and 11 children. Of the 181 families, 46% of the have one child; 31% have two children; 13% have three children; 7% have 4 children; and 3% have five or more children.
Parental Distress and Related Resources

As you know, having a preterm or low birth weight infant can sometimes feel like an emotional roller coaster.

One of the variables that we measure at each time point is the level of emotional distress and depressive symptoms mothers have experienced during the week prior to our visit. As you can imagine, the average level of distress (of the time points collected thus far) was the highest when infants were still in the hospital.

Average levels of maternal distress decreased by the time the babies reached 4 months past their due dates. Not all mothers followed this pattern, however, in part because of their unique family situations and the health and development of their infants over time.

One of the many pieces of paper you received from us at our first visit was a list of parenting and counseling resources. Here is the list of resources for the Madison and Milwaukee areas. As always, feel free to ask Dr. Poehlmann or one of our staff if you would like additional resources.

### Counseling & Family Support Resources in Madison (area code 608)

- Dane County Parent Council, Inc. 275-6740 (no fee)
- Family Enhancement 241-5140 (no fee)
- Family Service Center 232-1320 (sliding fee)
- Faith Based Counseling 250-0050 (self pay)
- Hilldale Psychotherapy & Growth Center 231-6731
- Mental Health Services for Women & Families 256-0942
- Mental Health Solutions 829-1800
- Madison Community Health Center 255-0704 (no fee)
- Moontree Psychotherapy Center 256-5115 (sliding fee)
- Parent/Infant & Early Childhood Clinic 263-6100
- Parental Stress Center office-- 241-4888
- 24 hr. stress line-- 241-2221

### Counseling & Family Support Resources in Milwaukee (area code 414)

- Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Greater Milwaukee 769-0447 (no fee)
- Crisis Line of Milwaukee County Mental Health Division 257-7222 (no fee)
- Helpline (24 hour) 276-3123 (no fee)
- Mental Health Association of Milwaukee 276-3122 (no fee)
- Mental Health Services 286-8886
- Psychiatric Crisis Center (24 hour) 257-7260
- Crisis Walk Center 257-7665

Sweet Dreams… from AJ Miller Schwichtenberg, M.S.

Did you know your that your little one will spend more time asleep than awake during the first two years of life? Sleep is an important part of early childhood. Knowing how preterm and low birth weight babies sleep will help us understand more about their development.

We collect data on infant sleep when the babies are 4, 9, and 24 months past their due dates. At each of these time points we ask you to keep a log of your baby’s sleep, and at 24 months we use an actigraph (motion sensor) to measure your toddler’s sleep and overall activity.

Analysis of 4 month data revealed some interesting patterns. Babies in this study slept from 8 to more than 16 hours per 24-hour period, with an average of 13 hours. Approximately 70% of infant sleep took place at night, ranging from 6 to almost 12 hours, with an average of 9.5 hours per night.

At 4 months past their due dates, some babies slept through the night whereas others woke regularly. Babies had a range of 0 to 5 wakings and an average of 1 waking per night.

Infant naps followed a similar pattern, with a range of 0 to 5 naps per day, and an average of 3 naps per day.

We are still studying your infant’s sleep patterns at 9 and 24 months and look forward to sharing the findings soon!

Thanks so much for keeping track of your baby’s sleep patterns, and sweet dreams to all of you!
Dr. Julie Poehlmann has been a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison since 1999. She grew up in Wisconsin and went to Marquette University in Milwaukee for her undergraduate work.

For graduate school, she attended Syracuse University in New York State to study clinical psychology with a focus on the development of young children in the family context. She returned to Wisconsin in 1998 to complete a postdoctoral fellowship in developmental disabilities at the Waisman Center.

Dr. Poehlmann’s research focuses on preterm infants and their emerging resilience. Through her work with young children and families, she seeks to identify factors that are associated with positive development despite developmental risks such as preterm birth. She is especially interested in how infants form and maintain family relationships, including how these relationships impact later development. She also has a strong interest in the effects of early intervention services.

Dr. Poehlmann is part of the Human Development and Family Studies department in the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin. She also has a joint appointment in the department of Educational Psychology and is an investigator at the Waisman Center. She teaches undergraduate courses in child development and child and family assessment. She spent 2 years teaching a class that was broadcast on public television. She also teaches graduate courses such as “Infancy and the Family” and “Attachment Relationships.”

She often gives presentations at local, national, and international conferences and has published research articles in scholarly journals. Her study of children born preterm or low birth weight is funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Dr. Poehlmann lives in the Verona area with her husband and 3 children (ages 4, 9, and 12 years). She spends her free time playing with her children, gardening, kayaking, and biking. She also likes to knit, read, and bake.