

Infant ventilation experiment a success

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Two British doctors who conducted a controversial experiment involving premature babies at University Hospital in North Staffordshire are being praised.

Pediatricians David Southall and Martin Samuels were suspended from practice for two years in 1999 while charges they had placed babies at risk were investigated.

At the center of the controversy was a 1990s experimental procedure that provided external respiratory support to babies with breathing difficulties, thereby avoiding intubating their lungs, which involved risk of damage, The Independent reported Monday.

The procedure, called Continuous Negative Extrathoracic Pressure, involved placing a box over the baby's chest and creating a vacuum that would help its lungs expand and draw in air.

Although an inquiry published in 2000 was critical of some of the trial's aspect, that inquiry itself was later criticized in a British Medical Journal report.

Now researchers reporting in The Lancet say the babies involved in the experiment did no worse, and, in some respects, did better, than those given conventional treatment. The Independent said.

The Lancet report says the children, now adolescents, have "substantially higher" language and visual/spatial skills than those given conventional

ventilation.

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