Transportation of VLBW (Very Low Birth Weight) Infants to Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU): A Change In Practice

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Background
Transporting VLBW is a challenge in NICU right from birth as preventing heat loss is of utmost importance.
In the past, transport incubator was used to transfer VLBWs from Operating Theatre, Delivery Suite to NICU or for any diagnostic procedures. The unit was heavy and required more personnel to maneuver to ensure smooth transfer.

Objective
To have a safe and seamless transfer of VLBWs while maintaining the targeted temperature. Improving the workflow that benefit staff and our vulnerable group of patients.

Methodology
- A shuttle (Giraffe) unit was modified to transport VLBWs:
  - The unit was tailored by vendor (include addition of poles and 2 cylinder brackets) for the attachment of transport ventilator, monitor, infusion pumps and portable gas cylinders
  - It comprises of battery pack that provides continuous power supply thus enabling the use of attached equipment and maintaining VLBW’s temperature during transportation
- To attach Giraffe Omnibed (incubator) onto shuttle when transporting VLBWs from Delivery Suite or Operating Theatre to NICU

Results
- Reduction in the usage of manpower compared to the use of a transport incubator
- Minimized handling of the VLBW as neonate is transferred to Giraffe Omnibed prior to transportation
- VLBW’s temperature is maintained throughout transportation

Conclusion
Poor control of body temperature in VLBW is associated with mortality and morbidity in preterm infants. The change in workflow of using Giraffe shuttle for the transportation of VLBWs has ensured normothermia which reaps better long term outcomes. Reduction in number of nurses required to assist in the transportation enhances productivity. This facilitates nurses to spend more quality time with neonates and their families. Good ergonomic practices also elevate healthcare professionals’ satisfaction and health.