The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Fairview-University Children’s Hospital in Minneapolis ranked in the top cluster of four exceptional NICU sites, according to a national NICU organizational culture assessment conducted by The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. NICUs at Fairview-University Children’s Hospital; Lucille Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford in Palo Alto, Calif.; Dartmouth—Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H. and Mission Children’s Hospital at Mission Hospitals in Asheville, N.C. each received high scores on all key dimensions in the survey.

“...Fairview has developed an organizational capability for making rapid, effective improvement to current practices,” says Anita Tucker, assistant professor, The Wharton School. “We believe that this capability coupled with their supportive organizational culture provides a solid foundation for breakthrough change in the future.”

“People working together is what makes our NICU such a great place to work and reaffirms what we already know. This is a team effort and every person has to do their job—no job is more important than the other,” says Margie Harder, nurse manager, NICU. “We have always functioned well as a team in patient care and now the Vermont Oxford Collaborative has given us tools and knowledge so we can achieve success in quality improvement and safety.”

The NICU survey sites were all members of the Vermont Oxford Network’s learning collaborative Neonatal Intensive Care/Quality 2002, a group of member hospitals meeting, working and communicating together to improve the quality and safety of newborn care and referred to by Tucker in her congratulatory letter as “a remarkable group of improvement-oriented units.”

“In addition, longitudinal data from similar surveys conducted during 1998 and 2000 clearly demonstrate the consistency of Fairview’s excellent performance,” says Tucker.

Fairview was distinguished by:

- Excellent teamwork/group relations within the NICU
- Support from other hospital units as well as the overall organization within the hospital
- High levels of job satisfaction for team members
- Strong nurse and physician collaborative leadership skilled at engaging all staff members in improvement effort
- High psychological safety for speaking up about errors
- Demonstrated ability for change efforts to improve quality of care received by neonates and to change people’s practice for the better

(over)
Fairview's scores on nurse leadership, physician leadership, intergroup working relations within the NICU and psychological safety were significantly higher than most every other NICU in the survey. In addition, Fairview has scored high on nurse leadership since 1998.

The assessment panel included Tucker and Richard Bohmer, M.D., assistant professor; Amy Edmondson, Ph.D., associate professor; Ingrid Nembhard, M.S., doctoral candidate; and Laura Feldman, B.S. research assistant, all of Harvard Business School.

The Vermont Oxford Network is a non-profit voluntary collaboration of health care professionals dedicated to improving the quality and safety of medical care for newborn infants and their families. Established in 1988, the Network is today comprised of over 485 NICUs, predominantly in the United States and including centers in Canada, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

The NICU at Fairview-University Children's Hospital had 443 admissions in 2003, each with an average 19.5 days length of stay.

Fairview-University Children's Hospital, the vanguard of breakthrough pediatric medical research and education in Minnesota, is a renowned pediatric teaching and research hospital that provides superior health outcomes through its nationally and internationally recognized programs and services to pediatric patients from around the world. Located on the east and west banks of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis and affiliated with the University of Minnesota Academic Health Center, Fairview-University Children's Hospital provides a broad spectrum of pediatric programs and services—ranging from blood and marrow and organ transplantation and cardiac and oncology services to maternal-fetal services and neonatal and pediatric intensive care.

Fairview Health Services is a community-focused health system providing a complete range of services, from prevention of illness and injury to care for the most complex medical conditions. Fairview provides services in many settings, including community centers, homes, clinics, hospitals and long-term care centers. Fairview is affiliated with the University of Minnesota's Academic Health Center and supports its mission of research and education. Fairview is a not-for-profit organization headquartered in Minneapolis with staff and facilities throughout Minnesota.