

Susana Pissarra, MD, is a Senior Neonatologist at a Level III University Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in Portugal, where she provides care to critically ill and extremely preterm newborns. Her clinical expertise encompasses complex prematurity, neonatal surgery, congenital anomalies, and highly specialized neonatal intensive care.

She also serves as Clinical Coordinator of the Human Milk Bank, promoting evidence-based practices that support optimal neonatal health and family wellbeing.

Dr. Pissarra has been actively engaged in developmental and family-centered neonatal care throughout her professional career. Her involvement with NIDCAP began early in her neonatal training at the Porto NIDCAP Training Center and has since become a cornerstone of her clinical practice, education, and professional development.

She is a strong advocate for individualized developmental care, recognizing the newborn as a unique individual whose behavioural communication provides essential guidance for caregiving. Through careful observation and responsive care, she seeks to promote neuroprotection, support infant self-regulation, and strengthen early parent-infant relationships, particularly in the context of intensive care.

Committed to family-centered care, Dr. Pissarra promotes a model in which parents are respected as essential partners in their infant's care and developmental journey. She has worked to advance developmental and relationship-based care practices within her institution, fostering environments that support both infants and families during highly vulnerable periods of life.

Beyond her clinical responsibilities, Dr. Pissarra is actively involved in professional education, mentorship, and research. She is dedicated to supporting healthcare professionals in developing greater confidence, sensitivity, and expertise in developmental care and strives to contribute to the dissemination and implementation of NIDCAP principles within neonatal services.

Her professional vision is grounded in the belief that excellence in neonatal care requires not only scientific and technical expertise, but also compassionate relationships, respectful communication, and a deep commitment to understanding the individual needs of every infant and family. Through her clinical, educational, and leadership activities, she seeks to advance a culture of neuroprotective, relationship-based, and family-centered care.

Through service on the NFI Board, Dr. Pissarra hopes to contribute to the continued growth and visibility of NIDCAP within the international neonatal community. As a clinician working daily in a tertiary-level neonatal intensive care environment, she brings firsthand experience of the challenges and opportunities involved in integrating developmental care into complex clinical settings. She is particularly motivated to strengthen engagement with neonatal professionals whose primary focus is clinical care, helping to build meaningful connections between the NFI, frontline healthcare teams, educators, and researchers. She views this bridging role as fundamental to promoting broader adoption of NIDCAP principles and supporting the development of neonatal care cultures that are both evidence-based and deeply relationship-centered.