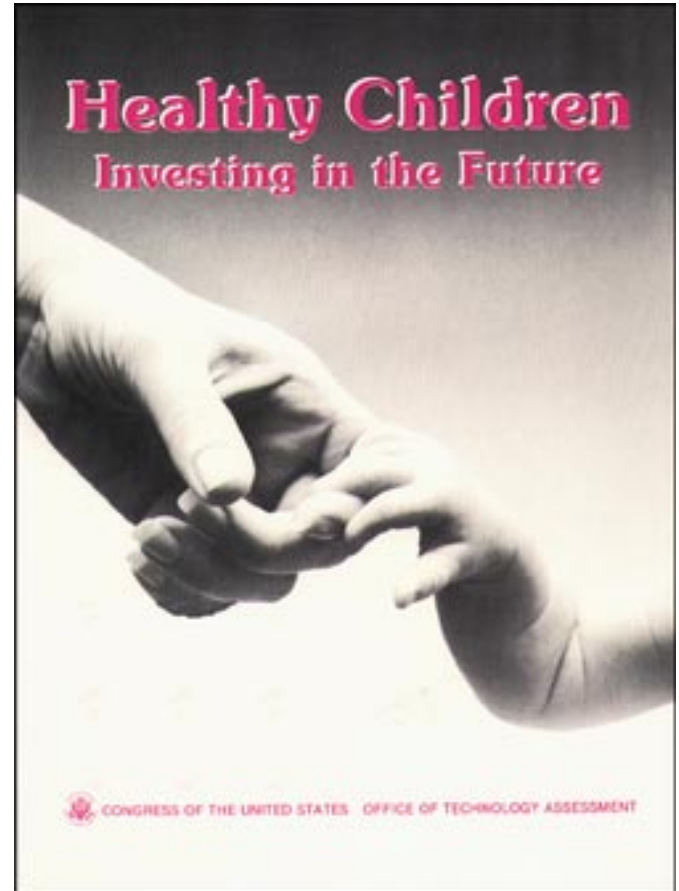


Healthy Children: Investing in the Future

February 1988

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Foreword

Infants and young children are among America's most vulnerable citizens; they are utterly dependent on their families and communities for the resources required to live and grow into healthy and productive adults. Health care for young children must be viewed as an investment with potential payoffs that will extend throughout their lifetimes. Like all investments, those made for children's health care should be channeled into directions that can most efficiently improve children's health.

OTA was asked by the House Energy and Commerce Committee and its Subcommittee on Health and the Environment and the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee to examine the effectiveness and costs of selected strategies for promoting and maintaining the health of children and to identify strategies whose implementation could substantially improve children's health or lower health care costs. The Committees also wanted to know why the infant mortality rate in the United States does not appear to be declining as fast as it has in the past and whether children have access to the care they need. The Senate Finance Committee asked OTA to examine the evidence on the effectiveness and costs of ambulatory tocodynamometry, a new prenatal care technology for monitoring pregnant women at high risk of premature labor.

This OTA assessment addresses all of those issues. Two related reports have already been issued as part of this study. An OTA technical memorandum, *Technology-Dependent Children: Hospital v. Home Care*, was released in May 1987 in response to specific questions about this group of children with special health care needs. OTA also prepared a case study, *Neonatal Intensive Care for Low Birthweight Infants: Costs and Effectiveness*, in December 1987 that examines the most recent data on this costly but life-saving treatment for low birthweight newborns.

This assessment was ably assisted by an advisory panel, chaired by Harvey Fineberg, Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health. In addition, many individuals from academia, the Federal Government, the private sector, and the public provided information and reviewed a draft of the assessment. The final responsibility for the content of the assessment rests with OTA. Key staff involved in the analysis and writing were Judith Wagner, David Alberts, Marvin Feuerberg, Elicia Herz, Kerry Kemp, Julia Ostrowsky, and Elaine Power.



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NOTE: OTA gratefully acknowledges the members of this advisory panel for their valuable assistance and thoughtful advice. The panel does not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its contents.

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List of Related OTA Reports

- Background Paper:
 - Children's Mental Health: Problems and Services.*
OTA-BP-H-33, December, 1986, GPO stock #052-003-01040-2, NTIS order #87-207 486/AS.
- Technical Memorandum:
 - Technology-Dependent Children: Hospital v. Home Care.*
OTA-TM-H-38, May 1987, GPO stock #052-003-01065-8.
- Case Study:
 - Neonatal Intensive Care for Low Birthweight Infants: Costs and Effectiveness.*
OTA-HCS-38, December 1987, GPO stock #052-003-01089-5.

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