Estrellita
Observing Fussy Babies and Their Fussy ODLs
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A critical component of Estrellita has been determining which observations of daily living (ODLs) to support. For infants, it’s difficult to know exactly how they’re feeling, so their ODLs tend to rely on objective metrics like weight and diaper changes (both of which we support). However, we’re also interested in capturing other infant-related ODLs, especially ones that are meaningful to parents and can serve as meaningful indicators for clinical purposes.

Evidence from our pilot interviews suggests that caregivers often refer to “fussiness” when describing their baby’s health problems. First-time parents, in particular, often sense that something is wrong, but don’t have enough experience to know what might be causing the fussiness. In these cases, caregivers can find it overwhelming to track ODLs because they’re unsure of which behaviors they should be capturing; after all, the fussiness could be related to common problems such as food sensitivities or tiredness, or it could be indicative of something much more serious. So, fussiness is one of our ODLs. To capture how fussy a baby is, we use a scale of 0-10, where 0 means that the baby is not at all fussy. While it’s true that a self-reported fussiness measure is subjective and will likely differ among caregivers—much like pain or fatigue measures—it is the relative change in fussiness that’s important, rather than the absolute values.

The visualizations of fussiness data can help caregivers diagnose problems. Many common causes of fussiness can be linked to routines. For example, if the baby is typically fussy around the same time of day, this may suggest that the fussiness is tied to the baby’s routines (e.g., his feeding or sleep schedule), rather than a serious health problem. Our charts also allow caregivers to reflect on how long their infant has been fussy. For example, if the baby is normally fussy for only two hours each day, but is fussy for eight hours one day, then this observed increase in fussiness might indicate a health condition that’s worth discussing with clinicians. Our hope is that clinicians will also find that the chart visualizations provide an easy way to interpret and understand a baby’s past fussiness behaviors or to link these behaviors to other indicators and ODLs.

It’s been exciting to see the fussiness ODL emerge out of our pilot interviews and be integrated into our application. When we’ve given demos of our app, people instantly gravitate towards the fussiness ODL as something they relate to and can easily understand. We hope our participants will also find it useful to track and share this information with their clinicians.