

Photographer Tips and Tricks

By Deborah Billingsly, NILMDTS Photographer

Creating an efficient work flow/post-production process has allowed me to not get overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of work that we do. I have streamlined my work flow with the help of a "notebook" that I have created which contains the necessary documents and information I need for each NILMDTS session. I've broken it down, cookbook style, for you to pull from!

- When a call comes in from the hospital, I grab my tote bag, camera bag, my notebook, and I'm on my way. I prepare myself emotionally in the car, as I want to be sensitive to the family's needs and really steady my heart.
- Upon arrival, I find the nurse taking care of the family and find out if paperwork is already in the room. The hospitals I cover have also adopted "the notebook" so this makes my job a little easier! I introduce myself to the family and explain what I'll be doing. Every family handles grief differently; assess your family and act appropriately. Find out their wants and needs relating to the photos. I think it is best to maintain a quite demeanor.
- Following the session, I make two copies of the consent form at the nursing station. One copy is for the patient's chart and the other copy goes in the folder I leave with the family. I make up a "Patient" folder that contains my NILMDTS business card, a brochure, and the "Important Info for Parents" slip sheet.
- When I get back to my studio I upload my images, burn a CD of raw files, and back it up on an external hard drive. Just in case!! I restock my notebook when I return from a session so I don't waste precious time making copies or looking for things later. I scan the consent form and place it in the client folder along with their images.
- If I need help with retouching, I rely on the Digital Retouch Artists (DRAs) for assistance. The DRAs can help with anything I don't know how to retouch or if a session was particularly sensitive. Their turnaround time is amazing. As there are different levels of DRAs it is important to note what level of retouching you need done (harder case, skin tearing case, removal of tubes etc.).
- When I finish retouching the images, I create a CD cover, burn the CD, and type the parent letter to send along. I contact the family before mailing the images to make sure they are emotionally ready to receive them.
- Finally, I go online and upload my session info on the NILMDTS website and email a copy of the consent form to headquarters.

My work flow really saves me time, but more importantly, I know that my sessions are done completely which allows me to focus more on providing families with everlasting keepsakes of

their precious babies. I try to use the network of photographers and DRAs for the support and assistance I need while doing this work.