

Assessment and Management of Birthing Needs of Singapore Women

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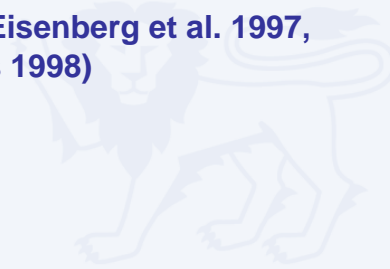
Background

- **Childbirth is a significant and deeply felt physiologic, cognitive, cultural, social and spiritual experience.**
- **Considered a normal and healthy event in the life of a woman.**
- **Many Singapore women are delaying to start a family to pursue academic and career achievements.**
- **A high rate of immigration has produced heterogeneous, multi cultural society.**
- **It is a challenge for the health professionals to deliver quality care to pregnant women.**
- **Existing social support groups and knowledge are now inconsistent with the diverse social profile of the country.**

Literature Review

The factors that influence a woman's pregnancy include her philosophy on life, health status, education, culture and financial status, support network, life experiences, her partner, her own particular needs and expectations.

(Stoppard 1996, Adelaide 1997, Eisenberg et al. 1997, Fallows 1997, Llewellyn Jones 1998)



Purpose of this presentation

- To explore the birthing experience of women residing in Singapore.



Methods

- Women recruited from antenatal clinic in a large tertiary maternity hospital.
- Antenatal women who are having their first baby and multipara.
- Semi structured interviews were conducted at a place and time convenient to the women.
- Average duration of each interview was 60 minutes.
- Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis.

Results

- 20 women were interviewed
- 10 Singapore born Malays
- 1 Chinese from China
- 9 Singapore born Chinese
- Age between 25 to 35 years old
- 17 of the women are currently working
- 3 are housewives
- All have husbands who are working

Findings

Birthing Experience in Singapore : The hospital

- All had a positive birthing experiences in Singapore
- Applaud the efficient medical services available
- No notable differences between care rendered of subsidized patients and private patients.
- Prompt discharge from hospital (within 24 hours)



Findings

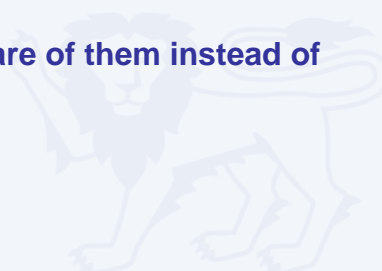
Support System

- Own mothers are their greatest support system
- Assist during confinement period and after
- Husband will provide financial support and emotional support during delivery




Findings

Confinement period

- All women still observed 30 days of confinement period
 - However, do not adhere to it totally
 - Observing it only as a respect to their mothers who believe in it
 - Would prefer mother to take care of them instead of mother-in law
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Findings

Breast Feeding

- 19 of the women attempted breastfeeding
 - Breast feeding lasted between 1 to 2 months only
 - Reasons for not breastfeeding include decreased production of milk, return to work, no place to express breast milk, find it troublesome
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Findings

Government policy

- All women found that the 3 months maternity leave are sufficient
- Baby bonus provided by government is not enough
- More affordable childcare, after school system needed
- More flexible working hours for mothers are desired
- Cost of living is getting higher
- Financial burden for family to have more kids

Findings

Stress During Pregnancy

- Burden of caring of family falls squarely on the shoulder of women
- Ideology that as a woman, career should come second
- Should be the primary care giver
- “Intensive mothering ideology”
- Staying alone during pregnancy : less support from parents

Discussion

- Financial needs are important but support system such as who to take care of the children are something that the government need to think about
- For example if the child care centre need to close for 2 weeks because of HFMD, who takes care of kids?
- More lactation consultants are needed in the community to teach the importance of breastfeeding
- Provide nursing rooms in public places and the work place
- Stricter laws should be implemented to prevent employers from retrenching pregnant women

Future plans

- Will continue to interview more women from various cultural backgrounds in Singapore to understand their needs during pregnancy
- Plan to develop a Birthing Needs index for pregnant women in Singapore