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Evaluation of postnatal care consultation services for postpartum mothers at the department of obstetrics, national hospital of obstetrics and gynecology in Vietnam

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Abstract---Objective: To determine the care needs of postpartum mothers in the first week after childbirth. Subjects and Methods: A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted on 205 mothers giving birth normally at the Department of Obstetrics, Central Maternity Hospital. Results: 53.2% of postpartum mothers felt confident in caring for their babies, while 27.3% lacked confidence in baby care. 56.6% of mothers expressed a need for advice on postpartum diet, and 20.0% had specific daily menu consultation needs. Postpartum mothers expressed concerns about both monitoring the health of the baby and breast-related issues, with a rate of 36.1%. 39.5% of mothers desired the hospital to provide general services for mother and baby care, and 21.5% wished for the hospital to offer a full range of counseling and care services for mother and baby. 42.4% of mothers planned to use hospital services after discharge. Conclusion: Many postpartum mothers have needs for postpartum counseling and care services for both mothers and newborns. Healthcare professionals need to provide detailed advice on department services so that mothers can be informed and efficiently register for services.

Keywords---Postpartum mothers, newborns, baby care, counseling.

1. Introduction

The postpartum period exposes mothers to many potential risks for long-term complications or even death. Therefore, coordinating postpartum care can be highly beneficial for both mothers and families, as well as for the healthcare of young mothers and newborns [1]. Most postpartum mothers typically stay in the hospital for a short period, ranging from 1-2 days (the first 24 - 48 hours). Care during this time largely depends on healthcare professionals and family members. Additionally, new mothers often lack knowledge in self-care and caring for newborns [3].

In the Department of Obstetrics at the Central Maternity Hospital, during the early postpartum period, healthcare professionals visit postpartum mothers and their infants at least four times to assess their health issues and provide timely care. Furthermore, to restore optimal health for postpartum mothers, the department has implemented several services, including plasma therapy for cesarean section wounds, perineal wound plasma therapy for mothers, postpartum breast massage, postpartum perineal steam therapy, and pre-discharge perineal ultrasound. Additionally, there are services for babies, such as baby massage, plasma therapy for the baby's umbilical cord, and heel blood screening for diseases. To effectively implement these services, we aim to understand the needs of postpartum mothers, step by step improving the efficiency of these services. Therefore, we conducted this study with the objective of determining the care needs of postpartum mothers in the first week after childbirth.

2. Subjects and Research Methods

A cross-sectional descriptive study of 205 postpartum mothers at the Department of Obstetrics, Central Maternity Hospital, from March 1 to March 31, 2023. Data collection through interviews with postpartum mothers when healthcare professionals visited and inquired about postpartum mothers.

Data were entered and analyzed using SPSS 20.0 statistical software.

Variables and research indices:

General characteristics of the study subjects: age, number of childbirths, economic conditions (based on the average income per capita per month of the mother's family). Assessment of the baby's condition and development regarding eating, sleeping, physical condition, etc.

Knowledge and skills of baby care by postpartum mothers.

Nutritional needs of postpartum mothers.

Concerns of postpartum mothers.

Postpartum mothers' needs for hospital services.

3. Results

Table 1. General Characteristics of the Study Subjects (n=205)

Characteristics	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Age		
≤ 18	5	2.4
19-40	190	92.7
>40	10	4.9
Number of births		
1	132	64.4
2	53	25.8
3	16	7.8
4	4	2
Economic condition		
Very good	13	6.3
Good	46	22.4
Average	103	50.3
Poor	40	19.5
Difficult	3	1.5

The data reveals that 92.7% of the study subjects are within the reproductive age. The majority of the subjects gave birth for the first time, constituting a significant 64.4%. Regarding the economic conditions, a considerable proportion of the participants reported a fairly good economic status (50.3%), followed by a good economic status (22.4%).

Table 2. Perceptions of Mothers Regarding the Infant's Condition and Maternal Ability to Care for the Child (n=205)

Aspects	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Current infant condition		
Good, sleeps well without crying	70	34.1
Infant is fine, sleeps a lot, feeds less	111	54.1
Infant cries and feeds poorly	20	9.8
Infant feeds poorly and vomits	4	2
Maternal ability to care for the child		
Confident	109	53.2
Lacks confidence	56	27.3
Not sure	25	12.2
Requires assistance	15	7.3
Knowledge of infant and self-care postpartum		
Good knowledge	114	55.6
Some knowledge	75	36.6
No knowledge	16	7.8

Analysis:

Regarding the current condition of infants, the majority (54.1%) reported that their infants were fine, sleeping a lot, and feeding less. In terms of maternal ability to care for the child, 53.2% expressed confidence, while 27.3% lacked confidence. A notable portion (7.3%) felt uncertain and sought assistance. Knowledge about infant care and postpartum self-care showed that 55.6% had good knowledge, 36.6% had some knowledge, and 7.8% had no knowledge.

Table 3. Characteristics of Maternal Nutritional Needs (n=205)

Aspects	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Dietary regime		
Very good	106	51.7
Normal	98	47.8
Not good	1	0.5
Nutritional consulting needs		
No	48	23.4
Requires specific postpartum dietary advice	116	56.6
Has a specific daily menu plan	41	20

Analysis:

A significant portion, 56.6%, of mothers expressed the need for postpartum dietary advice, and 20.0% had a specific daily menu plan.

Table 4. Some Concerns and Care Needs of Mothers (n=205)

Concerns/Worries	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Current concerns		
Personal health	4	2
Surgical scar	3	1.5
Urination	5	2.4
Breast and breast-related issues	11	5.4
Infant monitoring and care	46	22.4
Post-discharge health monitoring	33	16.1
Infant and breast-related issues monitoring	74	36.1
Surgical scar, infant monitoring, and breast-related issues	30	14.2
Desired hospital services		
Maternal care advice	2	1
Infant care advice	5	2.4
Maternal care services	4	2
Infant care services	9	4.4
Maternal and infant care advice	53	25.9
Maternal and infant care services	81	39.5
All 4 consultation and care services	44	21.5
No need	7	3.4
Intention to reuse hospital services		

No intention	3	1.5
Use hospital services	87	42.4
Use services outside the hospital	5	2.4
Self-care	47	22.9
Family member care	63	30.8

Analysis:

Most mothers simultaneously worry about monitoring the health of their infants and breast-related issues, with a percentage of 36.1%.

39.5% of mothers desire the hospital to provide combined services for maternal and infant care, while 25.9% desire advice on maternal and infant care.

42.4% of mothers have plans to reuse hospital services after discharge.

4. Discussion

Currently, the postpartum period for mothers is defined from 6 weeks to 12 weeks after childbirth. Extending this timeframe is essential to optimize healthcare for postpartum mothers and newborns. The World Health Organization recommends a comprehensive assessment of both mothers and infants during this postpartum period [5]. Postpartum care should encompass evaluations of physical, psychological, and social aspects of maternal health, breastfeeding practices, nutritional counseling, family planning, and the growth and development of the infant [6]. Postpartum mothers commonly experience issues such as fatigue, discomfort from perineal stitches, complications like bleeding, abdominal distension, or constipation [2]. Therefore, meticulous care is crucial, involving both healthcare professionals and family members. Recognizing the essential aspects of care, providing standardized, valuable services for postpartum mothers and infants, obstetrics departments often expand their services to include procedures such as plasma treatment for surgical scars and perineal stitches. This aids in wound cleansing, reduces infection risk, alleviates pain, and promotes rapid wound healing with minimal scarring [3]. Postpartum breast massage stimulates early milk production, clears milk ducts, and prevents nipple blockage [1],[4]. Postpartum perineal steam baths using herbal remedies assist in cleansing, reducing infection, and facilitating the swift recovery of the perineal area. However, for mothers to effectively consent to and benefit from these services, a thorough understanding of maternal and family self-care knowledge and skills is imperative. In this study, 64.4% of mothers gave birth for the first time, indicating limited self-care knowledge and skills for both mothers and newborns. Consequently, healthcare professionals need to provide detailed guidance and offer the benefits of these services to first-time mothers. Additionally, for mothers giving birth again, healthcare providers should understand and aid them in utilizing body care services to ensure the quickest recovery.

Surveying maternal knowledge and skills in infant care revealed that 27.3% lacked confidence, 7.3% were unaware of how to care for their infants and required assistance, and 12.2% were uncertain about their ability to provide adequate care. Hence, many mothers lack knowledge about infant care, particularly first-time mothers. Deploying advisory and infant care services is necessary. We have developed services for infants, including comprehensive

massages promoting physical, intellectual, and emotional development and love perception. Umbilical plasma services aid in quick cord drying, reduce infection risk, and are safe for infants. Heel blood tests for disease screening help identify metabolic and endocrine disorders early, providing a 95% chance of healthy development when treated promptly.

Postpartum, mothers express concerns about their own health, surgical scars, urinary issues, and breast-related problems. A report by author Luu Tuyet Minh recorded that 50.9% of mothers experienced urinary retention after the removal of a vaginal catheter post-delivery. Although this condition improved upon discharge, 35.5% continued to face this issue [2]. Thus, nursing staff must monitor maternal urinary conditions, providing guidance on corrective measures for dark-yellow urine through increased water intake, a balanced diet, or monitoring to identify the cause of red urine and devising appropriate care plans. Postpartum constipation typically lasts 3-5 days due to reduced mobility, fluid loss through breathing and sweating, and blood loss during delivery and perineal cutting. Inadequate nutrition and low daily water intake can exacerbate constipation. Hence, healthcare providers need to monitor postpartum bowel movements, especially considering the increased fluid requirement for breastfeeding. Healthcare professionals should guide mothers on appropriate dietary and exercise regimens to alleviate constipation. To address and overcome these issues, our unit has implemented services such as perineal plasma therapy and herbal steam baths, techniques that have proven effective in rapid perineal recovery, improving urinary and bowel functions.

Survey results indicate that the majority of mothers desire counseling and care services for both mother and child, with only a very small percentage (3.4%) expressing no need, likely due to average or challenging economic conditions. However, healthcare professionals must provide reasonable advice to ensure mothers' consent for necessary services during prenatal and postnatal check-ups. Additionally, we observed that 42.4% plan to utilize hospital services after discharge. This anticipated volume indicates significant interest and satisfaction among mothers with the services offered, signaling the need for appropriate plans in counseling and service implementation. However, an additional study is required to accurately evaluate the rate of mothers returning to use hospital services, identifying areas for improvement in departmental services.

5. Conclusion

A high percentage of postpartum mothers lack knowledge in both infant and postpartum self-care, with 36.6% having limited knowledge and 7.8% having none at all. All mothers express concerns related to their own and their infants' health. 39.5% of mothers desire hospitals to provide general maternal and child care services; 25.9% wish for maternal and child care counseling services; and 21.5% hope for hospitals to offer comprehensive counseling and care services for mothers and infants. Additionally, 42.4% of mothers plan to return to utilize hospital services.

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