

THE ROLE OF PARTNERS IN DECISION-MAKING

The role of partners in decision-making concerning the place of delivery and the choice of pain management methods.

Research theme

The involvement of partners during pregnancy and labour contributes to the health of the mother-to-be, the partner and the child. Nevertheless, attention is focused mainly on the health of mother and child in day-to-day healthcare practice. Studies have shown that the mother-to-be and her partner can have different preferences concerning the place of delivery and the choice of pain management methods. It is not known, however, what role the partner actually plays in the ultimate decision-making concerning these factors. Nor is it known whether and to what extent the role played by the partner in decision-making can influence the perception of the labour process and the mental health of the woman and her partner after childbirth. Insight into the role of the partner in decision-making and the possible effects of this involvement will help midwives in the provision of psychosocial support and in the counselling of couples in order to help them to arrive at well-informed choices. This study aims to contribute to the improvement of client-oriented care, where the partner has an important role to play.

Study design

First of all, a systematic review of the available literature was carried out. A cohort study of about 500 pregnant women and their partners was then set up. Data were collected with the aid of 2 questionnaires, which were distributed during the third trimester of the pregnancy and about 4 to 8 weeks after childbirth. Comparison of the responses of the pregnant women and their partners to the questionnaires allows the role of the partner in decision-making about the place of delivery and the choice of pain management methods. If possible, women with a partner were compared with those without a partner. Finally, qualitative study based on the reports of focus groups including partners was used to gain insights into how partners perceived the labour process and how they perceived the decision-making about the place of delivery and the choice of pain management methods.

Study population

Clients and their partners in the care of a primary midwife.

Inclusion criterion

Pregnant women and their partners in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy who are in the care of a midwife and who can speak, read and write Dutch. Pregnant women without a partner will also be invited to participate in the study.

Results

The results of the study are not yet known.

Time line

The study of partners and their role in decision-making concerning the place of delivery and the choice of pain management methods started in September 2012 and will last about 5 years. The first publication is expected in mid-2013.

Credits

1st research supervisor

Prof. H.E. (Henriëtte) van der Horst, department of General Medical Practice, VUmc

Other research supervisors are not yet known

Senior researchers

Dr C.C. (Caroline) Geerts, Department of Midwifery Science

Dr A.B. (Anke) Witteveen, AVAG

PhD student and Lecturer

A. (Anne-Marike) Smit MSc, department of Midwifery Science, AVAG

Funding

The study is funded by the Royal Dutch Organization of Midwives (KNOV) and AVAG.

For further details, please contact Anne-Marike Smit at annemarike.smit@inholland.nl