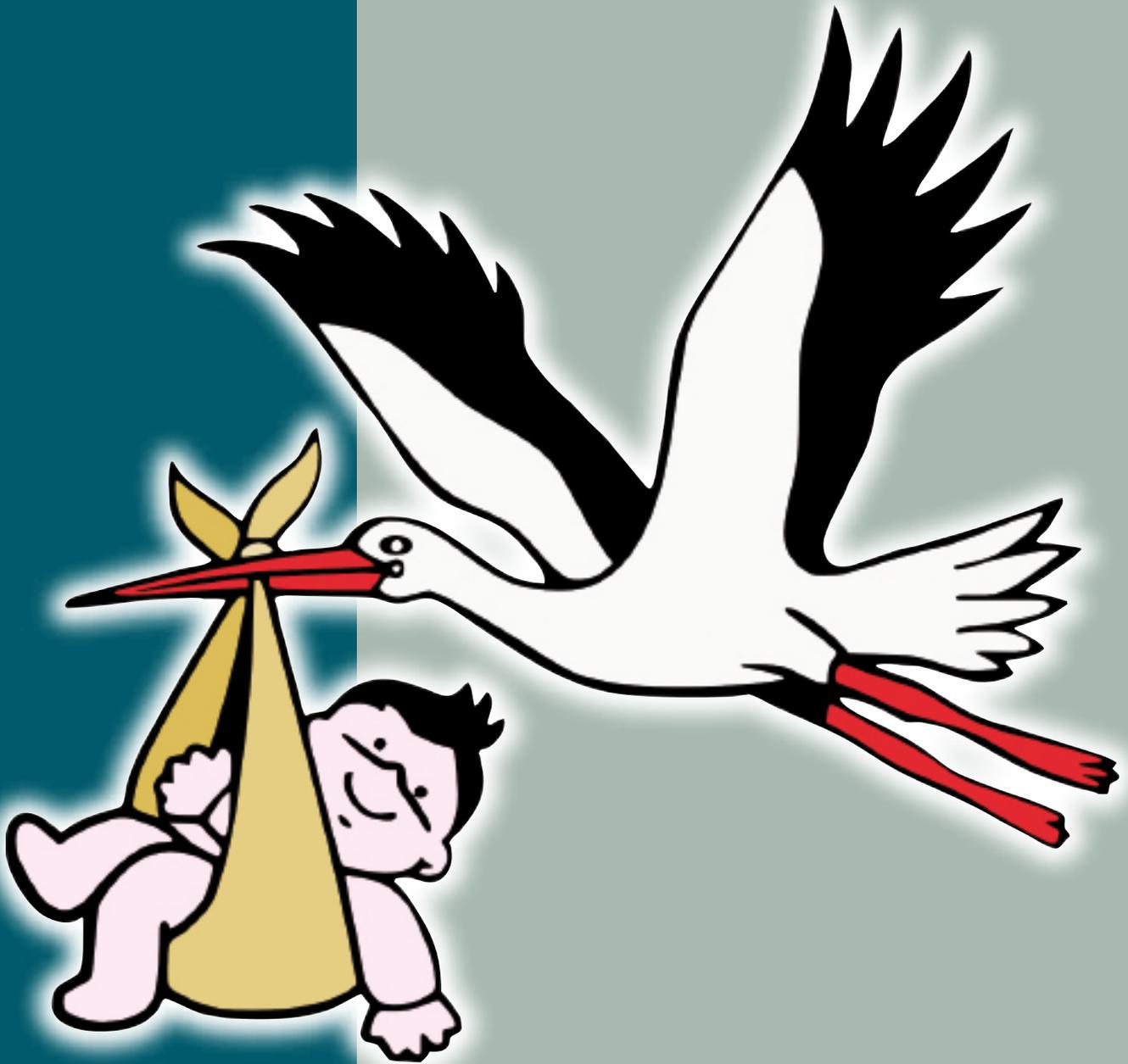
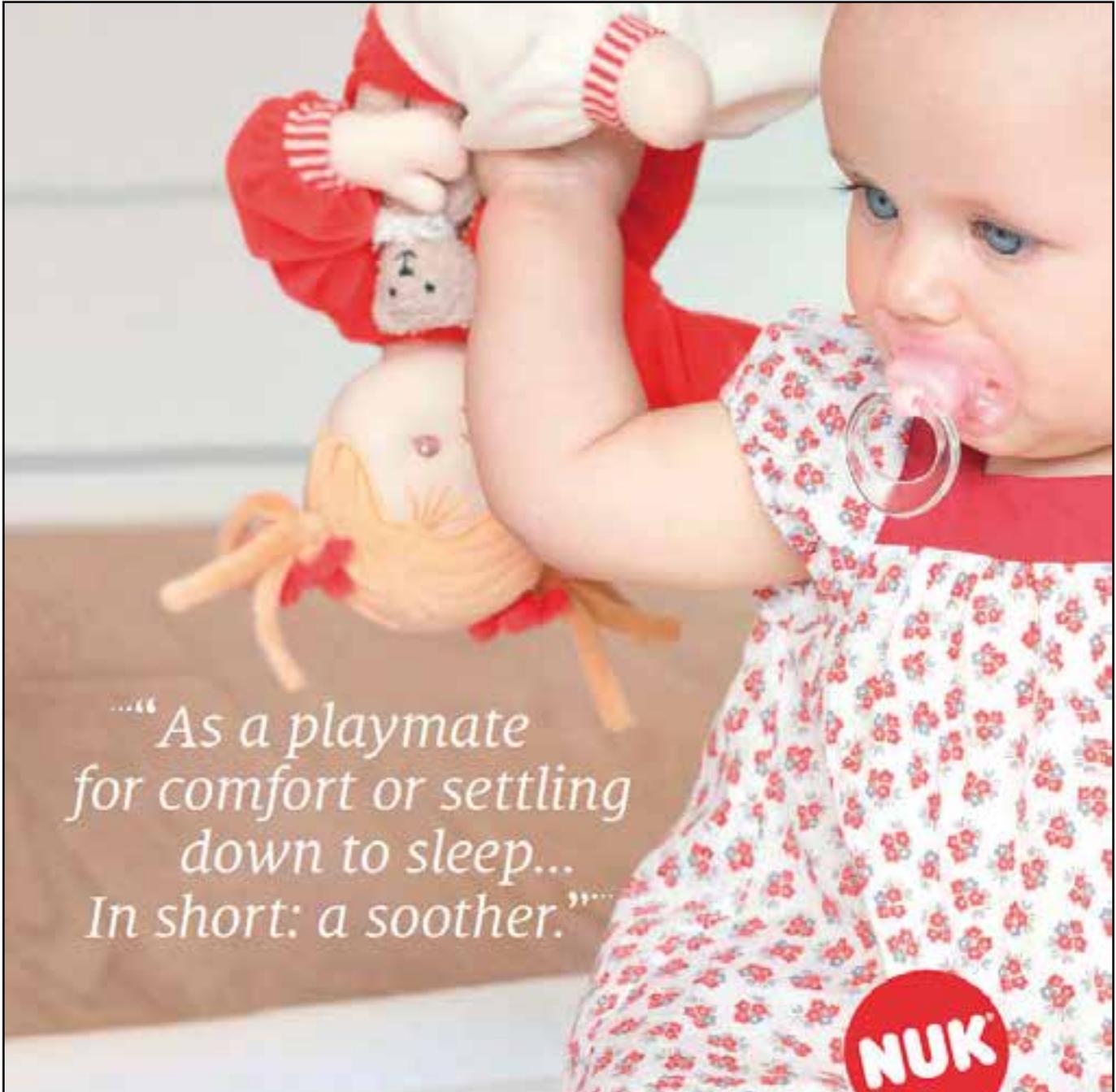


The Stork



Malta Midwives Association

Issue 1 February 2013



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Contribution to The Stork are welcome
and should be addressed to the
Editorial Board.

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those of the Midwives' Association.

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President's Message

Personal and Professional development of the midwife was always a crucial and focal point for the Malta Midwives Association. The Association strongly believes that the sharing of knowledge to improve practice for the benefit of the mothers, the babies and their families is of utmost importance.

Whilst launching this important project I wish to thank all those who contribute to make this important tool a reality.

Evidence base knowledge is fundamental to the development of the midwifery profession and the management of midwifery care.

Mary Buttigieg Said
President

Forthcoming Events

- 22nd February 2013 Annual General Meeting - MMA premises at 6pm.
All members are invited.
- 26th April 2013 ICM Southern European Regional Conference
**'Transforming the Culture of Maternity Care
towards the Physiology of Birth'**
Hosted by MMA at the Vivaldi Hotel, St. Julians
International Day of the Midwife
- 5th May 2013

International Conferences

- 23rd – 25th May 2013 European Congress on Intrapartum Care – Making
Birth Safer – Amsterdam
www.intrapartumcareamsterdam2013.org
- 13th-15th June 2013 19th Nordic Midwifery Congress – Oslo
www.jordmorforeningen.no/kongress
- 1st to 5th June 2014 ICM 30th Triennial Congress - Prague.
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Editorial

Dear Member,

Welcome to the first publication of 'The Stork'. I am very pleased to announce that this journal will be published twice a year. The second issue will be in July.

The purpose of this journal is to inform and communicate with members of forthcoming events and as a means of sharing knowledge. A lot of studies are undertaken by student midwives and qualified midwives to obtain their degrees and the majority of these studies are shelved and forgotten. This is a great pity, as we tend to refer and quote foreign studies which do not always reflect our practices and culture. Furthermore, it is hoped that in the future, there will be greater research utilization by using local research findings in the clinical field.

In this issue, you will find the abstracts of BSc midwives who qualified in 2012. In the next issue, we will be publishing abstracts of midwives who obtained MSc degree in the last 2 years. Eventually, we will publish all midwives' dissertation abstracts. There are quite a few midwives who obtained this qualification and we look forward to sharing the information with the members. We welcome midwives with MSc degree to accept our invitation to publish their dissertation abstract.

Pauline Fenech



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European Midwives Association

Workshop's Report

The European Midwives Association (EMA) is a non-profit and non-governmental organization, representing midwifery organizations and associations from member states of the European Union (EU). The last Annual General Meeting was held in Paris, France, in September 2012. Claire Zerafa and Pauline Fenech were the Malta Midwives Association's Representatives for this meeting.

Pauline Fenech participated in the workshop entitled Public Health: Alcohol and Obesity. It was reported that alcohol affects 1% of the EU member states' population (i.e. nearly 5 million). Alcoholism is a risk factor that can be 100% preventable. Many countries are adopting the policy of **zero tolerance of alcohol in pregnancy**, as it is associated with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

During the workshop, it was suggested that, at the booking visit, all mothers undergo an audit on the consumption of alcohol. The audit should include parameters on how much alcohol is consumed and its frequency. Women who score high are referred to alcohol clinics. This audit is already running in Sweden and stakeholders are considering including the partner in this survey. It was recommended that before introducing this tool, the midwife receives training on communication skills since it is of utmost importance for the midwife to be skilled and confident on how to ask the right questions, on how to react to positive answers and on the referral procedure. (The Swedish survey can be cited in: Survey Greta Rijninks EM 2009, Synopsis of Current National Research Initiative).

Another topic discussed during the workshop was Obesity. 2% to 8% of the total health costs are attributed to obesity and the mortality rate, in association with obesity, in different parts of the European Region is 10% to 13% (WHO, 2007). Obesity is considered when the BMI is above 30Kg/m on the first antenatal visit. The midwife has an ideal opportunity to discuss healthy eating habits with these women to help them reduce their body weight during pregnancy. Obese women are referred to a nutritionist. Many pregnant women may not be capable on cooking healthy food and avail themselves of ready-made food. Parentcraft talks could offer the possibility to encourage and discuss the preparation of simple healthy food. Midwives present emphasized that partners should

always be involved in such programmes.

Claire Zerafa participated in the group, 'Working with Women and their Families' which discussed antenatal care. In some countries, midwives and pregnant women can benefit from sharing information, discuss the available facilities and together tailor-make antenatal care that meets the needs of individual women. Women are encouraged to voice their views and concerns: e.g.

in the booking co-operation sheet an empty column is dedicated for the exclusive use of women where they are encouraged to write comments and questions which are discussed and answered during the following antenatal visit.

In some countries of the EU, Midwives have the possibility to train in specialized areas such as Drugs & Alcohol and Teenage Pregnancy. These midwives organize talks and women are referred to them for support. These specialized midwives follow mothers with such problems through pregnancy and postpartum.

Midwives have expressed the need to involve women and their families when discussing healthy lifestyle issues. Women and their families need to be partners with the midwife in providing optimal midwifery care. The following points emerged during the discussion:

- ❖ Midwives are working to move away from hospitals, teaching women in schools and organize conferences.
- ❖ Midwifery care is better promoted by women as service-users. Midwives need to organize groups such as women information evenings during which the midwives' work and responsibility are explained.
- ❖ The midwife should be the key player in helping women feel confident in deciding on her preferences during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period.
- ❖ The midwife is capable of debriefing and empowering women during all phases of pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period – most women need a midwife but very few need an obstetrician.
- ❖ When organizing labour ward forums women should be invited to participate.



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Reflection on the Study week *at Bristol West England University*

On the 27th of January 2013, together with nine midwives, I have arrived back to Malta from a study week in Bristol. It was a very fruitful learning experience. We had five study days at the University of West England in Bristol, where we have attended to various sessions with the emphasis being on normalising childbirth. These sessions included: promoting normality, an introduction to the use of complementary therapies, water birth, the development and running of birth centres, communication and assertiveness skills and leading change.

These sessions were an eye opener to us as they have motivated us to promote and normalise childbirth in ways that could be easily implemented in our health care system. A lot of importance was given to education, the education of mothers and their partners about normal childbirth. If we want change to happen, the pregnant women must know about it so as they can start requesting it. On the sixth day we went to visit several birth centres found in the Bristol area. This was also a very nice experience since it gave us ideas on how we can implement changes so as we will start transforming our delivery suite rooms into a more homely environment.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Malta Midwives' Association, particularly Mrs. Mary Buttigieg Said for giving me the opportunity to participate in this study week. I encourage all the midwives to participate in such activities which help us to develop our profession so as we would be better advocates for women. By participating in these activities it would help us to promote normality in childbirth by motivating us to be the catalysts for change.

Rebecca Zammit

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BSc Midwifery - Abstracts

Adolescents' Awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections

This study aims to explore adolescents' awareness of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), with regards to the knowledge of STIs in relation to the prevention, transmission and management of these infections. This study also explores whether education is a resource for the prevention of STIs. Ethical approval and other necessary permissions were obtained from all respective authorities prior commencing this project.

In order to fulfill the aim and objectives of this study, a self-administered structured questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 70 new recruits to the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), University of Malta (UOM) by convenience non-probability sampling. 64 participants completed the questionnaires, obtaining a 94.1% (n= 64) response rate. The data obtained was analysed manually through simple percentages and open ended questions were analysed using content analysis. Findings of this study showed that the most commonly identified STIs among adolescents were human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and human papillomavirus (HPV) and more than three quarters of all students knew that STIs could be asymptomatic and prevented by means of using the male condom. Additionally,

the majority were aware that the preferred place to refer to if suspecting an STI is the genitourinary (GU) clinic. The most commonly identified transmission method of STIs was blood and the majority of all respondents were aware that untreated STIs may lead to infertility. Although they had received information on STIs prior to their admission to University, the majority of participants wanted to know more about these infections. The findings obtained were discussed and compared to other similar studies discussed in the literature review.

Overall findings of this study were found to be comparable to other studies conducted abroad; however awareness regarding the symptoms of STIs was found to be deficient among local and foreign adolescents. In light of these results, the researcher suggested some recommendations for education, practice and research. These include amongst others: the provision of educational programmes to parents and teenagers; the establishment of a GU clinic for adolescents; using media to inform the public regarding STIs and replicating the study on a larger scale using random sampling or through a qualitative approach.

Christie Debono

Mothers' experiences of having a preterm infant with physiological jaundice requiring phototherapy

The aim of this study was to gain insight into mothers' experiences of having a preterm infant with physiological jaundice requiring phototherapy at the Neonatal and Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (NPICU) of the local, general hospital. The study's objectives were to identify mothers' understanding of neonatal jaundice, to explore mothers' views and experiences of interacting with their premature, jaundiced infants during phototherapy and to identify maternal concerns about the baby during phototherapy.

To accomplish these objectives, a qualitative approach was adopted and self-designed, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of eight Maltese mothers. These mothers had their infants delivered before 37 completed weeks of gestation and exposed to phototherapy due to physiological jaundice at the local NPICU. All the mothers who met the inclusion criteria for participation and who were approached, voluntarily accepted to participate. The interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The findings demonstrate that despite having experienced jaundice in their preterm

infants, overall, mothers had minimal knowledge of neonatal jaundice. Mothers perceived neonatal jaundice as a common condition which is not life-threatening. Participants obtained their information on neonatal jaundice from various sources. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that although mother-infant interactions during phototherapy were limited, most mothers made some form of interaction with their infants, primarily through touch and talk. Mothers also identified several barriers to mother-infant interactions during phototherapy. Finally, most mothers did not perceive phototherapy as an emotionally disturbing experience but they reported a number of concerns, mainly for their infants' eyes and vision.

In view of these findings, recommendations for practice, education and research were proposed, including the provision of recent and evidence-based information to mothers on neonatal jaundice and phototherapy, the promotion of mother-infant interactions during phototherapy, conducting the study on a larger scale and exploring the experiences of having a jaundiced, preterm infant requiring phototherapy from the fathers' perspective.

Rachel Ebejer

Women's Experiences in Delaying Pregnancy

This study aimed to explore women's experiences in delaying pregnancy. The objectives of this study were to identify factors that influence women in delaying pregnancy,

to explore the impact of delaying pregnancy on the woman's lifestyle, and to determine women's awareness of risks associated with delaying pregnancy.

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- remove the nozzle from the baby and clean with soapy water, disposable wipes



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In order to accomplish the objectives of this study, a qualitative approach was chosen. Audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted, guided by an interview schedule which was specifically designed for the purpose of this study. A total of seven women attending Parentcraft classes were recruited using purposive sampling. All of the women recruited consented to participate in the study. Ethical issues were safeguarded and prioritised. Data analysis was undertaken according to Burnard's (1991) thematic content analysis framework. The resulting three themes which emerged identified the factors influencing 'the timing of motherhood' while becoming more acquainted with 'the experience of motherhood' and gained an understanding of 'women's views on delaying pregnancy'. The findings showed that the majority of women approached childbearing as a major 'project' in their life – a 'project' which had been delayed due to various factors such as personal, health, educational and career purposes. The study also revealed that the experience of pregnancy

evoked a broad range of positive feelings, but also anxiety related to the baby's wellbeing and childbirth. Besides, information-seeking was found to be fundamental in their preparation for this new experience. However, a general lack of knowledge about the risks associated with advanced maternal age was observed. The findings obtained were discussed and compared to existing literature.

In view of these findings the following recommendations for research, education and practice were put forward: the need for educational sessions to midwives and midwifery students; incorporating educational sessions as part of life skills or sexual health programmes for adolescents; providing counselling and appropriate referral as components of programmes that are in direct contact with parents-to-be; repeating the study on a broader scale to allow generalisability of the research findings; and conducting a similar study which explores men's experiences in delaying fatherhood.

Mary Felice

Evaluating Women's and Men's Knowledge on Postnatal Depression

Lack of knowledge about postnatal depression (PND) in the community may hinder women suffering from this disorder from seeking the help required.

The aim of the study was to evaluate women's and men's knowledge on PND. In order to fulfill this aim a quantitative approach was adopted and data was collected by means of a questionnaire. The sample was chosen by means of convenience sampling and consisted of 30 couples (N=60), who were attending the Cana Movement course in preparation for their marriage. Data was collected during the month of November, 2011. Women and men were given the same questionnaire to be answered separately. Data was collected from three groups; the Fgura Parish Church, Msida University Chaplaincy and Msida Parish Church.

Findings revealed a high level of awareness about the term PND and its definition. However it was observed that women were more aware of the term PND when compared to males. Results regarding the definition of PND revealed that PND was confused with baby blues. Lack of knowledge on the prevalence rate of PND and PND occurring in fathers was evident in both genders. Overall, participants were knowledgeable about the risk factors and symptoms of PND.

However a gender difference was evident, with women being more aware of both the risk factors and symptoms of PND. Participants also believed that PND could have adverse affects on the whole family. In addition results highlighted lack of education about PND in Malta, especially in male participants, since few males indicated that they had received information regarding this subject. Furthermore few participants indicated that they received information from healthcare professionals. Information was mainly received from friends. A high percentage of participants correctly believed that PND requires professional help and the psychologist was the most commonly identified source of help by both female and male participants.

The study's results cannot be generalised due to the small sample size chosen by convenience sampling. Recommendations from this study include; increasing awareness of postnatal depression in the community, the need for midwives to be knowledgeable in order to educate the community and the need to repeat the present study on a larger scale.

Katya Galea

Mothers' Experiences of initiating Breastfeeding in the Neonatal and Paediatric Intensive Care Unit

This study set out to explore mothers' experiences of initiating breastfeeding in the Neonatal and Paediatrics Intensive Care Unit (NPICU). The objectives for this study were to explore what mothers found helpful during the initiation of breastfeeding and the difficulties they encountered in doing so.

To achieve this aim, a quantitative approach using a questionnaire as the research tool was employed. The questionnaire was administered to 24 mothers that met the inclusion criteria. Participants were mothers of infants admitted within 48 hours of birth, who were breastfeeding or expressing breast milk for their infants. Mothers were

chosen by convenience sampling. The final sample consisted of 23 mothers, achieving a response rate of 96%. Data was systematically analysed manually using descriptive statistics and content analysis. Findings showed that all mothers expressed breast milk to initiate breastfeeding, with six also latching the baby directly to the breast. The main difficulty experienced by mothers was low milk volume. During the initiation of breastfeeding, mothers felt supported by their husband/partner, midwives and nurses. Ways of providing support included words of encouragement and advice regarding breastfeeding. On the other hand when a difficulty with breastfeeding arose,

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midwives at obstetric wards were reported by mothers to be more supportive than midwives at the NPICU. Mothers also found the attitude of the staff at the NPICU, the facilities and the information provided regarding breastfeeding initiation very helpful. Results were discussed and compared to other similar studies.

In view of the above findings, some recommendations for practice, education and research were suggested. These include the need of addressing initiation of breastfeeding in antenatal classes, public health promotion and a written

breastfeeding policy for infants admitted to the NPICU. Also, the need of providing educational programs for midwives and nurses, providing the opportunity of co-care to parents and earlier direct latching if cardiorespiratory stability is achieved also emerged. Finally repeating the study by either using a quantitative approach and recruiting a larger sample or by adopting a qualitative approach to data collection, allowing for further depth into mothers' experiences is recommended.

Francesca Galvagno

Mothers' experiences of skin-to-skin contact with their babies in the immediate postnatal period

Early skin-to-skin contact provides physiological, psychological and behavioural benefits to both the mother and infant. Skin-to-skin care has the potential to influence the mother's experience of birth and the immediate postnatal period. The study aimed to assess mothers' experiences of initiating and maintaining skin-to-skin contact with the newborn in the immediate postnatal period. The objectives sought to evaluate mothers' knowledge regarding the benefits of skin-to-skin contact, to assess mothers' experiences of skin-to-skin contact with the newborn at birth, and in the first two postnatal days and to identify if skin-to-skin contact influences mothers' birth experiences, bonding with their infants and infant feeding.

A quantitative design was adopted to reach these objectives. A sample of 50 postnatal mothers was selected by convenience sampling from the obstetric wards of a general state hospital. A self-designed questionnaire yielded a 100% response rate. Data was analysed manually. Descriptive statistics were utilised for close-ended questions. Thematic content analysis was employed for open-ended questions.

Mothers described skin-to-skin contact with their infant as being a pleasurable, intimate and special experience.

All mothers agreed that skin-to-skin contact improved mother-infant bonding and the majority felt it enhanced their birth experience. Mothers expressed happiness, a transition to motherhood and felt skin-to-skin contact reassured the infant. Most mothers experienced skin-to-skin contact immediately at birth. The most frequent time-frame for skin-to-skin contact was 15 to 30 minutes with the main interruptions of skin-to-skin care being dressing and weighing the infant. Less than half of the mothers held their infant skin-to-skin until after the first feed. Midwives were influential in the implementation of, and mothers' knowledge on, skin-to-skin contact. Most mothers stated they were aware of skin-to-skin contact while pregnant. All mothers desired skin-to-skin contact in a subsequent delivery.

Recommendations for practice include, maintaining skin-to-skin contact until after the infant's first feed, postponing dressing and weighing of infants and encouraging implementation of skin-to-skin contact in the obstetric wards. Qualitative studies are recommended to better explore mothers' experiences in the local setting.

Rebecca Gilson

Women's Experiences of Vaginal Examinations during Labour

This study aimed to gain insight into women's experiences of vaginal examinations during labour. The objectives of the study were to disclose the feelings of embarrassment and anxiety incited in women whilst a vaginal examination is performed, to explore the experiences of women with regards to privacy and pain at the time of a vaginal examination during their labour, and to explore the experiences of women regarding informed choice and support whilst receiving a vaginal examination during their labour.

In this small-scale descriptive study, data was collected by means of an anonymised, self-completion, structured questionnaire which contained both closed- and open-ended questions. Convenience sampling was chosen to recruit a sample of forty (N=40) postpartum women from the two postnatal wards at the local general hospital. A response rate of 100% was achieved. Data was analysed manually using simple descriptive statistics and content analysis. Results showed that women were content with the frequency, privacy, sensitivity and support with which vaginal examinations in labour were managed. Women felt comfortable and were not embarrassed during the

examination, as the procedure was carried out in a dignified manner. Moreover, women felt that they were given adequate information on vaginal examinations. Nonetheless, there was still some possibility for improvement with regard to information-giving, opportunities to refuse vaginal examinations and associated pain. Despite this, results indicate that 14 (35%) women were very satisfied and a further 16 (40%) women were satisfied with their experience of vaginal examinations. On the other hand, seven (17.5%) women were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, one (2.5%) woman was dissatisfied whereas the remaining two (5%) women were very dissatisfied with their experience of vaginal examinations during their labour.

Recommendations include detailed information-giving on vaginal examinations at the booking interview and during antenatal classes, pre- and post-registration education on the potential physical and psychological effects of vaginal examinations and on other methods of assessing progress in labour, and the need for empirical research to justify the routine use of vaginal examinations.

Stephanie Schembri



Postnatal mothers' awareness of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and its associated risk

This study aimed at assessing postnatal mothers' awareness of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and their knowledge on the reduction of its associated risks. The objectives of this study were to assess mothers' awareness of the existence of SIDS, to identify their educational sources, and to gain insight into mothers' knowledge on safe infant practices leading to the reduction of SIDS.

To accomplish these objectives, a self-designed self-administered questionnaire was used. Fifty-three postnatal mothers attending the Well-Baby Clinics were recruited by purposeful convenience sampling. All participants consented to participate, thus obtaining a 100% response rate. The data was systematically analysed using simple-descriptive statistics and content analysis. The findings revealed that the majority of mothers were aware of the term SIDS, with midwives and parentcraft classes as the most identified source of information. Results further identified that almost all mothers failed to explain the cause

of SIDS. Mothers also lacked knowledge on safe sleeping practices in particular when avoiding prone sleeping, sleeping the infant on soft surfaces, tucking in the bedding and practising the feet-to-foot position. It may be concluded that even though postnatal mothers showed a high level of SIDS awareness, mothers are lacking knowledge on safe sleeping as recommended by international guidelines. This may suggest that some infants are being exposed to SIDS risk factors, which may be reduced with further maternal education.

The main recommendations included further SIDS education through antenatal visits and clinics, parentcraft classes, and public media; to replicate this study using a larger sample with a qualitative method of data collection, and to investigate SIDS awareness and knowledge among fathers, care givers, midwives and other healthcare professionals.

Ruth Marie Xuereb

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