“Doing it properly”: transition to motherhood for first time mothers 35 years and above

Citations
Altmetric

Author
Carolan, Mary Concepta

Date
2004

Affiliation
School of Nursing

Metadata
Show full item record

Document Type
PhD thesis

Citations

Access Status
Open Access

URI
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/36770

Linked Resource URL
http://cat.lib.unimelb.edu.au/record=b2938089

Description
© 2004 Dr. Mary Concepta Carolan
This qualitative study investigated the experiences of first mothering for a new social category of mothers, primiparae aged greater than 35 years. Participants were recruited from a tertiary hospital in Melbourne, Australia, a city of more than 3 million people. A total of 22 new mothers were interviewed about their experiences of transition to motherhood. In a smaller sidearm of this study, three focus groups of midwives and maternal and child health nurses were conducted in a bid to identify clinical needs for this particular group of mothers.

In general, participants reported high levels of anxiety in the early days of mothering and over 3 in-depth interviews, these women revealed a need for additional social and professional support. However, despite a shaky start, participants ultimately described themselves as both resourceful and proactive, in terms of recruiting information to meet their needs. Despite negative appraisal of their maternal capabilities by a variety of health professionals including midwives and maternal and child health nurses, and common associations of maladjustment, this study found to the contrary. By 6 months postpartum, most participants had, by their own admission, become confident mothers and were overwhelmingly positive about their mothering experiences. Although these women used services and phoned for advice more than perhaps younger mothers, they did not demonstrate the high levels of post-natal maladjustment or depression anecdotally associated with older first-time mothering. Focus group data also clearly indicated that this growing group of mothers had concerns and needs that differed from younger mothers, particularly in regard to confidence building in the first three months post partum. Findings explored ways to provide more meaningful support and improved professional care.

The importance of this study is located in the intellectual contribution it makes to the debate surrounding the social context of mothering. An opportunity also presents for health professionals to gain an understanding of the experiences of maternity for contemporary older primiparae. This new understanding may in turn enable health professionals to challenge existing preconceptions of maladjustment among this group of mothers. Finally, an identification of the specific needs of this cohort may give rise to more meaningful maternal support and patient sensitive care.

Keywords
motherhood; childbirth; middle age

Export Reference in RIS Format

Collections
Nursing - Theses [48]

Becoming a mother is also considered to be a An Achomawi mother and child. Motherhood is one of the few universal roles assigned to women. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS “normal” life course stage for women. This perception is also common in other societies. For example, Angelina Yuen-Tsang (1997) reported that many Chinese women accepted without question the view that childbearing was a natural and necessary part of their family life course; therefore, few ever considered the option of not having children. Although contemporary motherhood can be seen as a choice for many women, some pregnancies occur without a conscious decision. Many of these unplanned pregnancies occur among teenage women. The causes of unplanned pregnancy are often complicated. Mother-and-baby groups after the birth can give you the social contact and support you need. On the plus side, you’re probably more confident and relaxed now than you were 10 or 15 years ago, which is a bonus when you’re a mum. Having more life experience under your belt can bring maturity and better coping and parenting skills (Byrom 2004, Johnson and Tough 2012, Thomson et al 2014). You're more likely to breastfeed your baby and to breastfeed for longer (HSCIC 2012), which is good for your own health, as well as your baby’s. Maternal age ≥ 45 years and maternal and perinatal outcomes: a review of the evidence. Midwifery 29(5):479-89. Franz MB, Husslein PW. Transition to first-time motherhood. Pract Midwife 14(2):12-5. NHS Choices.