



Crying babies, tired mothers: Dealing with hurdles in early family health

Elisabeth Kurth, CM, PhD des.1/5; Holly Powell Kennedy, CNM, PhD²; Elisabeth Spichiger RN, PhD¹; Monika Schmid, CM³; Johanna Biedermann CM⁴; Elisabeth Zemp Stutz, MD, MPH⁵

University of Basel, Institute of Nursing Science¹; Yale University, School of Nursing, USA²; Swiss Federation of Midwives³; University Hospital, Women's Clinic, Basel⁴; Swiss Tropical and Public Health-Institute, Basel⁵

Background

- Up to 30% of new parents report problems with infant crying* and more than half of new mothers suffer from tiredness**
- Routine postnatal care lacks effective strategies to reduce the occurrence of these problems and their adverse effects on family health***



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Aims of the study

- A) Examine risk factors for early crying problem reported in midwives' postnatal home care
→ **CASE CONTROL STUDY**
- B) Explore mothers' experiences, perceptions and practice concerning infant crying and maternal tiredness (0-12 wks postpartum) → **LONGITUDINAL QUALITATIVE STUDY**

Methods

Case Control Study

Data set Administrative-clinical database of 36,821 mother-child pairs who enlisted in postnatal midwifery care in 2007.

Sample N= 1634 cases of early crying problem
N= 6129 controls
Parity: 57% primiparous, 43% multiparous

Matching Cases were matched with 4 controls who had been cared for by the same midwife.

Statistical Analysis multiple logistic regression

Longitudinal qualitative study

Purposive Sample 15 mothers with healthy neonates

Data collection participant observation & interviews at 1, 6 and 12 weeks postpartum

Data analysis Interpretive phenomenology

Results of case control study

A higher risk for early crying problems was associated with

- maternal depression < 10 days postpartum (OR 4.02, CI 2.91-5.56)
- psychological decompensation < 10 days pp (OR 2.59, CI 1.69-3.97)
- immigrant background (OR 1.40, CI 1.16 -1.80)
- planned return to paid work at 15/16 wks pp (OR 1.38, CI 1.07-1.79)
- physical complaints of mother (OR 1.37, CI 1.16-1.61)

A lower risk for early crying problems was associated with

- higher parity (2nd child: OR 0.53, CI 0.45-0.63) ****

Results of qualitative study

Mothers' beliefs about beneficial child care shaped how they combined baby and self care after birth. Getting adequate rest for recovery was especially difficult for mothers who had a fussy newborn and tried to fulfil all their child's needs immediately. They entered into sleep deprivation and exhaustion, unless they could benefit from practical support with child care.

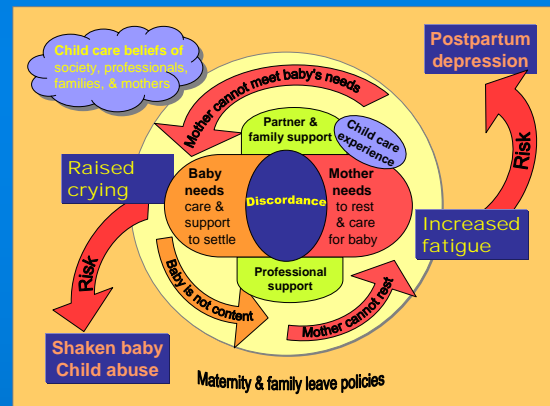


Fig. 1 Vicious circle of infant crying and maternal fatigue, and its' adverse effects

Conclusion

To recover after birth mothers require need-based and stress-reducing care, especially with the first child, or when they show symptoms of overstrain or depression, return early to paid work or have a migrant background.

References

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