

Research Institute of Midwifery and Reproductive Health

Stress Of Co-parents Related to A Traumatic Experience of birth across Switzerland (SOCRATES)

Birth can have a negative impact on the wellbeing of parents in the postpartum period. This critical transition period from birth to one year postpartum remains poorly studied. Mental, physical, and sexual wellbeing are particularly important during this time.

Background

Postpartum depression and childbirth-related post-traumatic stress disorder (CB-PTSD) affects approx. 13% and 5% of women, respectively. Regarding physical health, up to 41% of women still have pain related to childbirth six months afterwards. The prevalence of sexual problems affects between 41% to 83% of mothers. Some individual factors have been linked to postpartum health problems, but it is uncertain if the quality of care during childbirth is also associated with the development of postpartum problems. While no Swiss population-based study exists, collecting accurate and reliable patient-reported data on mental, physical, sexual health, and quality of life, will provide valuable insights on the impact of childbirth care and guide future policy decisions to improve peripartum care.

Aims

Our overall goal is to assess maternal and co-parent's health and wellbeing in the postpartum period. To achieve this goal, the objectives of the SOCRATES study are as follows:

Project Leaders

- Prof. Dr. Susanne Grylka, ZHAW, Co-PI
- Prof. Dr. Laurent Gaucher, HEdS & HES-SO Genève, PI

Project Team ZHAW

- Antonia Müller, MSc
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- Dr. Thomas Desplanches
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Project Time

01.03.2024 - 28.02.2027

Partners

Swiss maternity units

Funding Partner

Swiss National Science Foundation

Project Status

Ongoing

1) to estimate, in both parents, the incidence of mental problems two months postpartum, specifically child-birth-related post-traumatic stress disorder (CB-PTSD), 2) to explore the etiology of postpartum maternal mental health problems and identify early predictors such as quality of care during childbirth, 3) to assess maternal quality of life up to one year postpartum, 4) to describe how parental mental problems identified at two months postpartum may influence maternal wellbeing (with a focus on physical and sexual health) at six and twelve months.

Methods

We conduct a national prospective cohort study across all cantons of Switzerland. Data for births occurring in Swiss maternity units (N=109) will be included over an approx. one-month period, constituting a representative sample of the population (N=3'200 births), and representing the diversity of quality of care. Information on medical data, provision, and experience of care will be collected at birth. Self-reported questionnaires to assess mental, physical and sexual health, as well as quality of life up to one year after birth will be used. Patient-reported outcomes will be measured by validated questionnaires at two, six and twelve months. Additionally, a survey will be conducted with maternity units to assess local organisation of care, which could be associated with the quality of care.

Expected Results and Impact on the Field

This national cohort study will provide new knowledge about parents' health and wellbeing up to one year postpartum, which will help to improve perinatal health provision and policies. We will identify quality-of-care-related factors that impact parental health and wellbeing after childbirth and recommend evidence-based measures to improve quality of care and maternity care organisation. This study will address the lack of a reliable perinatal health indicator system and national population-based data in Switzerland by providing a representative sample which can be used for further research.



Prof. Dr. Susanne Grylka, MSc Midwifery, PhD Epidemiology, is head of the Research Institute of Midwifery and Reproductive Health at ZHAW. She is a midwife with many years of clinical experience and has been working at ZHAW since 2016. She leads larger and smaller research projects. Her main areas of research and interest are the onset of labour, quality of care, postpartum quality of life, postpartum sexuality and breastfeeding.



Antonia Müller, MSc in Midwifery, has accompanied families over several years, both during labour and in the postpartum period. As a research associate at ZHAW, she supports various research projects and is pursuing her interest in the quality of midwife-led care models in the clinical setting as part of her doctorate at the University of Zurich. She also introduces healthcare professionals to scientific work in continuing education.



Isabel Breitenmoser, MSc in Midwifery, works at ZHAW in the Bachelor's degree programme and in the Research and Development Institute as a research associate. She has been involved in several research projects on quality of care and provision. Also, she accompanies families as an independent practicing midwife and has several years of professional experience in a Swiss maternity unit.

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