

First-time expectant fathers' experiences and expectations of the perinatal period

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Abstract

Postnatal depression (PND) affects approximately 16% of women in Australia. PND can have damaging and lasting effects on women, their infants and the family, including the risk of paternal PND (PPND). There is limited research on men's perceptions of and understanding about PND, despite the fact they may play an important role in identifying symptoms and encouraging their partner to seek help. Furthermore, they may also require emotional, psychological and practical support during the perinatal period. The current understanding of PND within a biomedical model includes both psychological and biological elements. In this qualitative study, the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes first-time fathers have of the perinatal period, specifically in relation to PND and their attitudes towards help seeking were explored. As well as covering the psychological and biological aspects of PND, gender roles and men's expectations and notions of motherhood were discussed by participants. Through triangulating data from both expectant fathers and their partners, Thematic Analysis identified five main themes: Preparing for a Newborn, Illness Perceptions of PND, Gendered Roles and Power, Idealistic Postnatal Expectations, and The Risk of PND to Men. This study provides insight into what first-time fathers know and are prepared for in the postnatal period. These insights have the potential to inform health professionals in educating and preparing first time parents for the reality of life with a newborn, in clinical settings, health promotion campaigns and in health care and government policy.

Presentations based on the data from this thesis

De Sousa Machado, T. (2016, September). *First-time expectant fathers' experiences and expectations of the perinatal period*. Presentation at the South Australian Gender & Sexuality Studies Postgraduate Conference, Adelaide, South Australia. (See Appendix I)

De Sousa Machado, T. (2016, November). *First-time expectant fathers' experiences and expectations of the perinatal period*. Invited Presentation at The Future of Fatherhood: What's next in fathering practice and research? Conference, Wollongong, NSW (See Appendix I)

DECLARATION:

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University and, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no materials previously published except where due reference is made. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

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