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An analysis of the determinants of postpartum perineal pain in the absence of vaginal damage

Caroline Matteo

Glasgow Caledonian University, UK

Statement of the Problem: Postpartum pain has shown to be linked to a variety of consequences on health and well-being such as: mobility and ability to perform daily tasks, bonding with infant, mental health, breastfeeding. Perineal pain is the most frequently reported pain (90% of patients) and is also associated with impact on sexual activity. Studies in midwifery have suggested that perineal pain is strongly associated to episiotomy, tear, or laceration, but that it may also be present in the case of an intact perineum. This is coherent with research in other medical specialties that suggest pain is not necessarily proportionate to anatomic lesions, and that other determinants are at stake. Studies encompassing all perineal statuses have suggested alternative determinants such as: breastfeeding, mental health, mode of delivery, pushing technique. However, no study to this day explores patients' views, nor is there a study that explores specifically the case intact perineum. This study is a Gadamerian hermeneutic study and aims to gain an understanding of postpartum perineal pain in the absence of vaginal damage. This is hoped to enable better prevention, care, and understanding by midwives in order to improve patients' experience of postpartum. Data collection will take place in France between September 2019 and March 2020. The data will be collected using open interviews of participants having given birth vaginally to a single live child and have not undergone episiotomy, tear, or laceration. The study will be guided by Fleming et al's (2003) 5 steps for data analysis.

matteocaroline.pro@gmail.com