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The effect of epidural education on primigravid women's decision to request epidural analgesia: A cross-sectional study

Maha Hesham Alakeely, Arwa khalaf Almutari, Ghadah Abdulrman Alhekail, Zainah Ahmad Abuoliat, Alaa Althubaiti, Laila Abdul-Rahman Aboltai and Hanan Al-Kadri

King Abdulaziz Medical City, Saudi Arabia

Background: Epidural analgesia represents one of the most effective pharmacological ways to relieve labor pain. Women's awareness regarding the use of epidurals is increasing. As the decision to use epidural analgesia during labor is affected by many social, personal and medical factors, this study aimed to explore the factors contributing to a pregnant women's decision to use epidurals and to understand the benefit of implementing a health education program regarding epidural analgesia.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted with primigravid women visiting the Obstetrics Clinics at King Abdul-Aziz Medical City in Riyadh from October 2014 to December 2016. The participating women were educated on the use of epidural analgesia during labor by a professional health educator utilizing specially designed educational materials. We assessed the relationship between the women's decision to request epidural analgesia and their age, place of residence, occupation, income and education level using a questionnaire.

Results: A total of 81 primigravid women were included in the study. Employed pregnant women were more likely to request epidural analgesia than non-employed women (46.7% vs. 18.2%, $P=0.019$). After education, significantly more pregnant women were planning to request epidurals (mean score for answers before education was 2.12 ± 0.578 vs. 2.27 ± 0.592 after education, $P=0.013$). Other variables, such as age, level of education, income and place of residence were not significantly associated with the participants' decision to request epidural analgesia.

Conclusion: Health education on epidural analgesia is an important factor in increasing primigravid women's desire to request epidural analgesia. Early education on epidural analgesia during antenatal care is needed for better decision making regarding the use of epidural analgesia during labor.

mahaakeely@gmail.com

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