

Qualitative study on perception of health care workers regarding postpartum dietary practices of mothers with a history of gestational diabetes mellitus

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Background: The risk of developing type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) in women with Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM) can be minimized by dietary modifications during the postpartum period. Health care workers should play a leading role in advising and motivating these mothers. The aim of this study was to explore the perception of health care workers regarding dietary practices of GDM mothers during the postpartum period.

Study/Program Objectives: To explore the perception of nurses and midwives regarding appropriate foods, dietary habits and the factors which have a negative impact on postpartum dietary modifications of mothers with a history of GDM.

Methods: Three field midwives and three postnatal nurses were invited for this study. They were selected from districts of Colombo, Gampaha and Galle. Data were collected by in depth interviews which were conducted till the saturation point was achieved. These dialogues were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were independently reviewed by the researchers and themes were identified and coded using a content analysis approach.

Results: Six key themes evolved from the data included, (1) Myths and traditions of food and food habits specific to postpartum period (2) lack of awareness of mothers to healthy food habits (3) cultural barriers (4) negligence of mothers and families (5) financial barriers and (6) lack of interest. In addition to these themes, health care workers perceived time pressure, social pressure, lack of family support and lack of motivation as important barriers in rural mothers.

Conclusions: Myths and cultural beliefs, inadequate awareness and motivation, negligence of the family and socioeconomic status are key areas to be considered when introducing postpartum dietary modification programs for GDM women to reduce the risk of developing T2DM in later life.

Public Health Implications: As nurses and midwives being primary health care providers, their perception regarding postpartum dietary practices of GDM mothers is important to attenuate the development of DM in this group.