



#25798 Interprofessional care management of perineal injuries by physiotherapists and midwives after childbirth

A qualitative study

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Hypothesis / aims of study

In the past 2.2% of women who were giving birth in Austria suffered from an obstetric anal injury each year (1). As a result, perineal pain, flatus and fecal incontinence, or sexual dysfunction may occur. To minimize or even prevent any of these consequences, an interprofessional care management system is required (2).

The aim of the study is to identify how physiotherapists and midwives take part in the management of perineal injuries and its consequences and how they include interprofessional communication and teamwork in their daily practice.

Study design, materials and methods

In this qualitative study, expert interviews based on a semi-structured interview guideline were conducted to explore the dynamics of interprofessional collaboration in the management of perineal lacerations. Four physiotherapists and five midwives were included and interviewed either online or in person. The transcribed interviews were analyzed through categories, which were specified using the deductive category formation method.

By recognizing the distinct roles of physiotherapists and midwives, and fostering interdisciplinary communication, healthcare providers can ensure holistic care for women during the postpartum period and beyond.

Results

Aspects	Findings
Transmitting information regarding patient history	Professions focus on different aspects in anamnesis and examination. Therefore, exchange of information would be beneficial.
Examination and treatment strategies	While midwives examine the healing process of the scar, physiotherapists concentrate on activation and function of the pelvic floor.
Managing births and educating patients about treatment options	Especially after severe perineal lacerations, an interprofessional team needs to decide, which birth mode would have the lowest risk to worsen the symptoms.

Interpretation

The results show the need of establishing scenarios where interprofessional exchanges are possible. The lack of communication between health professionals has already been mentioned before in the study of Gustavsson and Eriksson-Crommert (3). They also stated that the teamwork between physiotherapists and midwives leads to a more evidence based practice regarding postpartum care. Therefore, a culture of interprofessional collaboration where communication concerning the different treatment strategies is established could be a future goal in the care management of women with perineal lacerations. This study shows some limitations as the small amount of participants represents only a few opinions on this topic. Another constraint of the study is that the author herself did the interviews and the interpretation, which could have led to some sort of subjective evaluation.

"...collaboration gives care a completely different quality. By coordinating with others, I often come across things I might not have known otherwise..." (006H, Z. 187-189)

"There's a patient with a severe injury, let's take a look at it together. Come over to our therapy sessions and see how we approach the treatment, and we'll stop by to see how you handle things or what you tell the women." (004P, Z. 188-192)

"...we try to include as many health professions as possible into our network..." (004P, Z.39-41)

References

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(2) Green, B. N., & Johnson, C. D. (2015). Interprofessional collaboration in research, education, and clinical practice: working together for a better future. *J Chiropr Educ*, 29(1), 1-10. <https://meridian.allenpress.com/jce/article/29/1/1/131206/Interprofessional-collaboration-in-research>

(3) Gustavsson, C., & Eriksson-Crommert, M. (2020). Physiotherapists' and midwives' views of increased inter recti abdominis distance and its management in women after childbirth. *BMC Womens Health*, 20(1), 37. <https://bmcwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-020-00907-9>