

Caring for Women and Their Families: Providing Psychosocial Support During Maternity Care

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Background

The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) has outlined numerous milestones that residents in obstetrics/gynecology must achieve during their training. These include development of: 1-compassion, integrity, and respect for others, 2- respect for patient privacy, autonomy, patient-physician relationship, 3- interpersonal and communication skills necessary for communication with patients and families, and 4- interpersonal and communication skills necessary to provide informed consent and shared decision-making (ACGME, 2019).

We created an innovative online educational program focused on these often-neglected areas of training for all providers of maternity care, including physicians in training (residents and fellows), practicing physicians, nurses, and other practitioners at the bedside. A key principle of our program development was that it was both interdisciplinary and interprofessional, including contributions by patients. We applied the concepts of trauma-informed care in the setting of providing maternity care as our foundation for training. We used as our exemplar an educational program we previously developed for all staff providing care in Neonatal Intensive Care Units. This program has been found to be effective at improving nurses' (the primary study population) knowledge and confidence in providing psychosocial support to NICU parents (Hall, 2019). Additionally, we wanted to satisfy the mandate passed by several states requiring that physicians who provide maternity care receive training in perinatal mental health issues.

Content/Action

A multidisciplinary and interprofessional team consisting of obstetricians, specialists in neonatal and perinatal medicine, nurse midwives, obstetric nurses, psychologists, and patients developed a 6-course online learning program that contains the following topics: 1- Using Trauma-informed Care as a Basis for Communication in Maternity Care, 2-Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders: Providing Emotional Support During Maternity Care, 3- Providing Support During the Antepartum Period of Maternity Care; 4- Providing Support During the Intrapartum Period of Maternity Care, 5- Providing Support During the Postpartum (Fourth Trimester) Period of Maternity Care, and 6-Supporting Maternity Care Staff as they Support Patients. Patients contributed personal narratives to demonstrate learning points, collected resources they felt would be helpful to clinicians, and helped to review and edit all content. Each course describes how trauma-informed care can be integrated into obstetric care to ensure patients feel safe, and invested as partners in their own care at every step along the way. High risk social and emotional factors, and how to identify and respond to them, are enumerated. There are also multiple links to other sites on the internet that reinforce the content being presented, as well as downloadable documents that further enhance learning by demonstrating best practices. Courses have interactive cases to reinforce clinician learning. Each course has an extensive bibliography, and all content is firmly grounded in evidence-based literature.

Lessons Learned

An interdisciplinary and interprofessional model can be successfully used to create educational content for providers that speaks to their patients' needs. This model affords providers the opportunity to understand the patient experience from a deeper, more personal, and more meaningful perspective.

Implications for Practice

An innovative online learning program has the potential to widely disseminate educational content on providing psychosocial support, which is required in obstetric training but is not often a specific part of training curricula. Enhancing provider understanding of the patient experience can lead

to increased sensitivity to patient needs and improvement in both compassion and in communication skills. Attention to staff's own needs for emotional well-being is a critical part of the curriculum, as quality care can best be delivered by providers who can avoid burnout.

References:

ACGME. 2019. "ACGME Program Requirements for Graduate Medical Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology." Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. https://www.acgme.org/Portals/0/PFAssets/ProgramRequirements/220_ObstetricsAndGynecology_2019_TCC.pdf?ver=2019-04-26-111908-393.

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