

Barriers and Challenges to a Healthy Lifestyle for Postpartum Women and the Possibilities in an Information Technology-Based Intervention: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract : Background and aims: Overweight and obesity are an increasing challenge on a global level. In Denmark, more than one-third of all pregnant women are overweight or obese, and many women exceed the gestational weight gain recommendations from the Institute of Medicine. Being overweight or obese, is associated with a higher risk of adverse maternal and fetal outcomes, including gestational diabetes and childhood obesity. Thus, it is important to focus on the women's lifestyles between their pregnancies to lower the risk of gestational weight retention in the long run. The objective of this study was to explore what barriers and challenges postpartum women experience with respect to healthy lifestyles during the postpartum period and to assess whether an Information Technology based intervention might be a supportive tool to assist and motivate postpartum women to a healthy lifestyle. Materials and methods: The method is inspired by participatory design. A systematic text condensation was applied to semi-structured focus groups. Five focus group interviews were carried out with a total of 17 postpartum women and two interviews with a total of six health professionals. Participants were recruited through the municipality in Svendborg, Denmark, and at Odense University Hospital in Odense, Denmark, during a four-month period in early 2018. Results: From the women's perspective, better assistance is needed from the health professionals to obtain or maintain a healthy lifestyle. The women need tools that inform and help them understand and prioritise their own health-related risks, and to motivate them to plan and take care of their own health. As the women use Information Technology on a daily basis, the solution could be delivered through Information Technology. Finally, there is room for engaging the partner more in the communication related to the baby and family's lifestyle. Conclusion: Postpartum women need tools that inform and motivate a healthy lifestyle postpartum. The tools should allow access to high-quality information from health care professionals, when the information is needed, and also allow engagement from the partner. Finally, Information Technology is a potential tool for delivering tools.

Keywords : information technology, lifestyle, overweight, postpartum

Conference Title : ICWPH 2020 : International Conference on Women and Perinatal Healthcare

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : December 10-11, 2020