

Jordan University of Science and Technology

Jordanian women's perceptions of intrapartum vaginal examination

Authors: R Hatamleh, H Gharibeh, A All Bnayan

Abstract: Background. Vaginal examination (VE) is a common procedure and its effectiveness has been questioned. In some countries, such as those in the Middle East, this procedure is more arbitrary than others and may cause distress to women. Objectives. To assess Jordanian women's perceptions of VE during the intrapartum period, their perceptions of support and information received and its possible impact on women's future reproductive decisions. Methods. A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data from 331 women who attended at the comprehensive health centres in Irbid during the study period. The survey population were primiparous Jordanian women who had all given birth vaginally. The survey was carried out during the postnatal period. Results. Approximately 46.5% (n=154) of women surveyed reported negative perceptions of VE, and 59.5% (n=197) perceived support and information given from health care providers about VE to be minimal. The mean frequency of VE was five times (SD=2.4) ranging from one to 15 times. The main impact of the VE on the women's future reproductive decisions was fear of having another pregnancy. There was a significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) between women's perceptions of the VE and their age ($p = 0.001$), level of education ($p = 0.001$), employment ($p = 0.012$), expectations of the VE ($p = 0.037$), information received from healthcare providers ($p = 0.015$), and women who had five or more times ($p = 0.0001$). Implications. The study has implications for midwifery educators, clinical midwives and future research. Curriculum planners need to ensure that midwifery training care is based on an appropriate model of care that incorporates both the biological and the psychological components of care. This needs to include ensuring that practitioners provide women with the necessary information and choices to make an informed decision. Conclusions. Negative perceptions around VE suggest that this technique may be used in an inappropriate or insensitive way