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VOLUNTARY ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY ON PERINEAL PROTECTION IN MIDWIFERY PRACTICE IN A DISTRICT GENERAL HOSPITAL

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Introduction

In the United Kingdom the incidence of obstetric anal sphincter injury (OASI) for primiparous women has been reported to have tripled from 1.8% to 5.9%, over a 12-year period.¹ UK study showed that 'hands-on' the perineum during the crowning at second stage reduced the OASIS overall rates by 23%.² The objective of our survey was to determine the differences in practice among midwives on manual perineal protection.

Methods

Anonymous questionnaires were completed by midwives in a district hospital. Questions were based on hands-on or hands-off technique, number of years of experience and confidence in performing an episiotomy.

Results

Fifty questionnaires (77%) were returned out of sixty five. 3.6% (3) midwives preferred the Hands-off method and majority were Hand-on 66% (33). Average number of years of experience in the hands-off group was 17 years compared to 15 years in Hands-on group.

Percentages of midwives with low confidence in episiotomy were 8% (4). This group had less than five years of experience compared to the more experienced group who were noted to be being more confident in episiotomy.

Indication for episiotomy amongst midwives were foetal distress 46% (23) and likelihood of perineal tearing 54 % (27). Episiotomy angle of 60 degree was maintained by 84 % (42) midwives. 26% (13) were not confident in assessing third/fourth degree tears. Majority 98% (49) had training in perineal suturing.

Conclusions

Lack of manual perineal protection is known to be a major risk factor for OASIS. This is a woman's health problem with serious quality of life and long-term adverse health-economic implications. As noted from our survey, there is a need for further enhancement of training on episiotomy, , assessment of third and fourth degree tears and also implementation of Hands-on perineal protection. We are hoping to achieve reduction in our OASI rate by introduction of OASI care bundle.

Reference

1. Gurol-Urganci I, Cromwell DA, Edozien LC, Mahmood TA, Adams EJ, Richmond DH, Templeton A, van der Meulen JH. Third- and fourth degree perineal tears among primiparous women in England between 2000 and 2012: time trends and risk factors. *BJOG*.2013; 120:1516–1525.