Maternal Experience with Infant Care after Hospital Discharge: A Literature Review
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OBJECTIVES
To identify how mothers with preterm infants and mothers with full term infants are similar and different in their concerns about providing care for their infants after hospital discharge.

RESULTS

- Fifteen studies included discharge teaching, mothers’ readiness for discharge, and maternal emotional responses after discharge and/or sources of information.
- Eight of the studies examined mothers with preterm babies, three evaluated first time mothers and five studies examined mothers with full term infants.
- Six studies were qualitative, eight were quantitative and one used a mixed design.

How Full Term Mothers Handle Care after Discharge

- Major Concerns after Discharge
  - Concerns about maternal and infant health after discharge were experienced within the first three days after discharge.
  - Mothers wanted more time at the hospital to recuperate physically and emotionally before discharge.
  - Breast care, physical health, postpartum nutrition and warning signs of maternal health problems were not taught to mothers or included in the educational materials they received.
  - Mothers also reported not receiving education about breastfeeding, bottle-feeding, newborn development and signs and symptoms of illness.
  - Discharge Teaching and Readiness
  - Quality of discharge teaching was significantly and positively associated with readiness for discharge.
  - Mothers with full term infants who reported not being ready for discharge were significantly unhappier than mothers who were prepared for discharge.

- Infant Feeding Challenges
  - Mothers’ breastfeeding needs varied and in many cases were unmet during hospitalization.
  - Lack of public support through stigmatization of public breastfeeding and lack of facilities to promote breastfeeding in public places discouraged breastfeeding.

How Preterm Mothers Handle Care Post Discharge

- Emotional Responses after Discharge
  - Mothers with preterm babies expressed negative emotional responses such as fear, anxiety, and guilt after hospital discharge.
  - Mothers of preterm infants doubted their ability to take care of the baby and to carry out discharge teaching from nurses but were committed to providing the best care possible.

- Major Concerns after Discharge
  - Some mothers reported not knowing their infants well and described the first day at home as the hardest, filled with uncertainty and angst.
  - Most mothers worried about their infant’s medical status and future development.
  - Post discharge hospital utilization was high in the first 3 days after discharge.

- Preterm Mothers’ Perceptions and Challenges
  - Mothers and staff differed significantly on whether information on infant care was actually discussed as part of the discharge teaching process or not.
  - Poor quality discharge teaching was associated with increased likelihood of infant emergency room visitation.

Coping with Infant Care after Discharge

- Mothers were ill prepared to handle issues in caring for their newborns and to deal with their own insecurities at home.
  - The majority of mothers with preterm infants slept in the same bed with their infants wanting to give them “body heat.”

How First Time Mothers Handled Care after Discharge

- Sources of Information
  - Mothers received support from friends, family, colleagues, and health care professionals.
  - Health care professionals were considered an important and dependable source of information in addition to pregnancy books.
  - First time mothers may over-utilize health services because of insufficient knowledge on how to handle problems at home, when to contact a provider and ancillary services available.

- Coping with Infant Care after Discharge
  - The maternity experience was described as positive or negative; mothers’ negative experiences included fatigue and physical discomfort.

- Infant Feeding Challenges
  - Breastfeeding was the topic in which first time mothers were most interested, and they reported they were not adequately prepared for it.

- The most common breastfeeding problems included the correct positioning of the infant during feeding and after breastfeeding, checking if the baby was hungry, breast engorgement, and cracked nipples.

CONCLUSION

- Negative emotional responses after discharge are more common in mothers with preterm babies than full term mothers.
- The most prevalent concerns of mothers with preterm babies were infants’ health and medical issues after discharge.
- Coping with infants in the first night, one week and a month after discharge was a major challenge for the mothers especially those with preterm babies.
- Like preterm mothers, full term and first time mothers reported needing professional help in the first three days after discharge.
- Healthy infants were concerned about early discharge, their own health and basic care of their infants.

BIBLIOGRAPHY