Soulful childbirth - upgrading communication on existential matters in Danish Maternity Care Services

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Beginning of life

• Birth
  – potentially transforming life
  – impacting existential meaning

• In research found to be:
  – Unique
  – Mysterious
  – Powerful
  – Transforming
  – Unifying
  – Meaningful
  – Transcendent

• Rebirth of woman into a mother
Interest in spiritual care training?

WHO

• Observation in 18 countries of how spirituality, religion and personal beliefs (SRPB) relate to quality of life: "It is suggested that SRPB should be more routinely addressed in assessment of QoL, as it can make a substantial difference"
  » WHOQOL SRPB Group 2006

• Spiritual Care → Palliative Care: "Integrates the psychological and spiritual aspects of patient care;"
  » WHO definition of palliative care 2011

• Feb 2018: New WHO guideline on intrapartum care
  – Growing medicalization of the process: "...not only the clinical requirements for a safe labour and childbirth but also meet the psychological and emotional needs of women."
    » WHO 2018
Maternity Care

• Existential aspects of the childbirth period remain in the periphery of prevailing care
• Hospital is the most religious place in the city?
• New initiatives emerging from the Danish national church and private market related to motherhood and childbirth
Motherhood transition through an existential lens

Nationwide survey among first-time mothers (FT or PT) 2011 (n=913)

- Existential meaning among first-time mothers (2014)
- Prayer and Meditation among first-time mothers (2016)
- The moment of birth through an existential lens in secular society (2018 – in submission)
Motherhood transition through an existential lens

Making existential meaning in transition to motherhood—a scoping review
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Abstract
Objective: To provide a thematic overview of the existing meaning-making related to transition to motherhood through a health lens and to discuss the themes from a philosophical perspective.
Design: A scoping review of the literature on meaning-making related to motherhood transition through an existential lens.
Methods: PubMed, Scopus, Embase, and Google Scholar were searched for relevant references. Studies published between 1990 and 2020 with dimensions of existential meaning-making related to motherhood transition were included. Thematic analysis was used to extract themes.
Results: The following themes were identified: family, self, environment, relationships, and emotions. The results indicate that existential meaning-making is important in the transition to motherhood. The themes identified in the literature are relevant to clinical practice and research.

First child's impact on parental relationship: an existential perspective
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Abstract
Background: The first child's birth is for most mothers a profound experience carrying the potential to change life circumstances and values. However, little is known about how becoming a mother influences the existential dimensions of life within the parent-child relationship. The aim of this study was to explore how becoming a mother might change the parental relationship seen from the mother's perspective with a specific focus on dimensions related to existential meaning-making.
Methods: A 199 Danish first-time mothers answered a questionnaire, from which five core dimensions related to changes in the parent-child relationship were identified: personal development, relational development, emotional development, identity development, and self-development. The results indicate that existential meaning-making is important in the transition to motherhood. The themes identified in the literature are relevant to clinical practice and research.

Practical Meaning Among First-Time Full-Term and Preterm Mothers
A Questionnaire Study
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ABSTRACT
Background: The first child's birth is considered a time that women might experience existential distress and gain new perspectives on life. The aim of this study was to investigate if the first-time full-term and preterm mothers experienced existential meaning-making through prayer and/or meditation and if this was associated with changes in their existential meaning-making.
Methods: A questionnaire survey was conducted among first-time mothers who gave birth at full term or preterm in 2010. The questionnaire was based on previous research and included questions related to existential meaning-making.
Results: Of the 258 mothers who participated, 22% reported experiencing existential meaning-making related to becoming a mother. The respondents were significantly more likely to report experiencing existential meaning-making if they had a higher level of education and if they lived in a rural area. Women who had a higher level of education were more likely to report existential meaning-making related to becoming a mother. Women who had a higher level of education were more likely to report existential meaning-making related to becoming a mother.

Key Words: childbirth, preterm birth, maternal stress, existential meaning-making, full-term birth, preterm birth.
Aim

• ...to develop, evaluate and implement continuing education focusing on existential communication as part of an important professional development for midwives, obstetricians and nurses
Characteristics

• Beginning of life – expectations different from end of life
• Maternity Service – hospital
• Time constraints – contacts lasting on average 15 minutes
• No life-continuing contact (as GPs)
• 1/3 of midwives leaves maternity ward (Bondo 2016)

Photo: University of Nottingham Health Service
Effect of good communication

• Psychosocially (examples)
  – Reduction of negative feelings
  – Improved illness-”self-efficacy” among cancer patients

• Somatic (examples)
  – Improved BP among hypertensive patients
  – Improved BS regulation among diabetics
  – Reduction of post-operative pain
    • Reduced use of pain-relieving medication
    • Downgrading of stress hormones

Study context A

• Large regional hospital: Hospital Lillebaelt
  – 2010: Launch of big scale mandatory communication skills training course based on the Calgary Cambridge Guide and initial efficacy studies from the hospital

• Consists of 5 elements:
  1. Education of trainers
  2. Courses for HP in clinical departments (3 days course)
  3. Education of new staff
  4. Courses for staff in service departments (2 days course)
  5. Maintenance of communication skills

Ammentorp J, Kofoed P-E. Pat Educ Couns. 2011
Study context B

• Findings from mandatory communication skills training-course in a hospital context
  – Improved patients experiences of communication and of care and treatment
  – Improved self-efficacy among HP

  Ammentorp J, Laulund L, Kofoed P-E. 2011; Nørgaard B et al 2012,
Study site & Participants

• Kolding Hospital – a part of Hospital Lillebaelt  
  – 3300 births
• 42.000 ambulant visits related to pregnancy  
  and childbirth
• Observations from mandatory communication  
  skills training-course at the department...
Study design

1. Exploration
   - FGI Women/partners
   - FGI HCP
   - Workshop (HCP/W)
     - Literature review
     - Self-efficacy survey

2. Development
   - Exploration phase
   - Similar interventions locally
   - Similar interventions internationally

3. Implementation Evaluation
   - Blended-learning course
   - Evaluation via interview + self-efficacy survey
Existential matters

Empty-handed I entered
The world
Barefoot I leave it

My coming, my going –
Two simple happenings
That got entangled

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Thank you for your attention

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