

Abstract

The Accessibility and Understanding of Nutrition Advice in First Time Mothers [†]

Caitlin Sisson and Maria Anna Choukri *

Department of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health, Ara Institute of Canterbury, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand; caitlin.sisson@yahoo.co.nz

* Correspondence: maria.choukri@ara.ac.nz

[†] Presented at the 2018 Nutrition Society of New Zealand Annual Conference, Auckland, New Zealand, 28–30 November 2018.

Published: 12 March 2019

Background: Nutrition is vital to achieve optimal health outcomes for both mother and baby during pregnancy. Inadequate nutritional intake of the mother can impair physiological and cognitive development of the child. Yet, pregnant women around the world do not meet nutrition recommendations and report low nutrition knowledge. International research shows women perceive information and resources to have poor accessibility. The aim of this study is to explore how pregnant women access nutrition information in New Zealand and their perceived understanding of the material.

Methods: A one-hour focus group was carried out with 6 pregnant women, recruited from Christchurch, New Zealand. Women were screened to be first time mothers, fluent in English, and experiencing a normal pregnancy. The session was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Grounded theory was used to identify key theories and emerging patterns from the transcript.

Results: The primary source of information for the women was an information pack received from their GP and conversations with their midwives. None of the women were given any information on general healthy eating during pregnancy or given advice where to access additional information. Most of the advice provided centered on food safety, with some women overwhelmed by the list of foods not to be eaten. Nevertheless they felt confident in their ability to apply this advice in their everyday lives. Additionally, women relied on advice from friends and family rather than professionals.

Conclusions: Findings suggest that there is an emphasis on food safety messages rather than nutritional adequacy during pregnancy. It is possible that women who seek supplementary information from friends and family will find it to provide conflicting advice to official guidelines. These insights into the effectiveness of current advice can be used to inform providers of how services could be improved.



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