Assessment of Male Partner Needs and Experiences during Labor and Birth

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Introduction to the Problem

Traditional roles have changed

Assumptions:

He will be present during labor & birth
He will be primary support

Male companion = husband
Male companion = father of baby
To conduct a survey of male partner feelings, needs, and satisfaction during labor and birth.

To determine if the results match literature

To evaluate if there are additional needs
Background & Significance of Problem Related to Healthcare

- Over 4 million births in the U.S. each year
- Male partners present in majority
- No assessment of his needs
- If poor coping
  - Miscommunication
  - Tension
  - Anger
  - Affect birth experience
Synthesis of Evidence

- Six studies since 1976 on male partner experience in labor & birth

- Limitations of research
  - White Middle class
  - Married Educated

- Gaps in research
  - Husband vs. boyfriend vs. father of baby
  - Cultural differences
  - Term vs. preterm
  - Environmental factors
Research Questions

1. What are the feelings of the male partner regarding labor and birth experience?

2. What are unmet needs of male partners during labor and birth?
Practice Setting

- VUSN Nurse–Midwife Practice
  - 21 Certified Nurse–Midwives
  - Two practice sites
  - About 3,000 births yearly at VMC
  - 800 babies yearly by midwife practice
Project Plan & Methodology

- IRB approved study
- Convenience sample of 60 male partners
- Inclusion: English speaking, 18 yr or older, term, live birth, vaginal birth or unplanned cesarean section
Survey development

- 25 questions
- Reviewed to clarify questions
- Questions framed based on literature review
- Survey not an established validated tool
Envelope with invitation & survey inside within 24 hours following birth experience

Men completed survey

CNM picked up survey with next postpartum rounds

Sealed surveys placed in box in a locked call room for investigator to retrieve and review
Results: Demographics

- 41 surveys distributed
- 32 returned, all were completed
- Response rate of 78%
Results: Demographics

- **Race**
  - White: $n = 26 (81\%)$
  - Black: $n = 3 (9\%)$
  - Other: $n = 3 (9\%)$

- **Marital status**
  - Married: $n = 31 (97\%)$
  - Single: $n = 1 (3\%)$

- **Living in same household**
  - Yes: $n = 32 (100\%)$

Note: percentages are rounded
Results: Participant information

- **Number of baby**
  - 1\(^{st}\)  \(n = 18\) (56%)
  - 2\(^{nd}\)  \(n = 9\) (28%)
  - 3\(^{rd}\)  \(n = 2\) (6%)
  - 4\(^{th}\)–6\(^{th}\)  \(n = 3\) (9%)

- **Type of birth**
  - Vaginal  \(n = 28\) (88%)
  - Cesarean section  \(n = 4\) (13%)
Results: Reported feelings

First impression of staff upon arrival to hospital

- Extremely friendly: 72%
- Somewhat friendly: 16%
- Neither: 6%
- Somewhat unfriendly: 3%
- Extremely unfriendly: 3%
- Other: 3%
Results: Reported feelings

How he felt at start of labor

- Happy: 59%
- Excited: 63%
- Nervous: 19%
- Scared: 0%
- Didn't believe it: 13%
- Mad: 13%
- Other: 47%
Results: Reported feelings

How he felt at the birth of baby

- 78% Excited to see baby
- 63% Proud
- 28% Who baby looks like
- 28% Worried for baby
- 22% Worried for woman
- 22% Other
Results: Reported feelings

- Fear during labor?
  - Yes \( n = 13 \ (41\%) \)
  - No \( n = 19 \ (59\%) \)

- Fear for life of woman or baby?
  - Yes \( n = 13 \ (41\%) \)
  - No \( n = 19 \ (59\%) \)
Results: Reported feelings

- **Vaginal births report of fear**
  - $n = 10$ (36%)
  - All who reported fear were having $1^{st}$ & $2^{nd}$ child
  - No fear with $3^{rd}$ or $>1$ child

- **Cesarean births report of fear**
  - $n = 3$ (75%)
  - These three were having $1^{st}$ & $2^{nd}$ child
  - The one with no fear having $3^{rd}$ child
Results: Feelings on midwifery care

- Was midwife competent
  - Yes $n = 31$ (97%)
  - No $n = 1$ (3%)

- Did midwife do a good job explaining what was going to happen in labor?
  - Yes $n = 31$ (97%)
  - No $n = 0$ (0%)
  - Other $n = 1$ (3%)

- Did midwife demonstrate ways to help comfort laboring woman?
  - Yes $n = 17$ (53%)
  - No $n = 15$ (47%)
Discussion

- Demographics similar to literature.
- Experience emotions throughout childbirth, not passive.
- Type of birth may relate to fear.
- Number of previous children may relate to fear.
Discussion

- Good satisfaction with midwifery care

- Want focus to remain on mom and baby, but want to be acknowledged
Limitations

- Small convenience sample
- Had to rely on midwives to hand it out and collect
- Survey not tested for validity
- Offered survey in only one type of labor and delivery setting
- Limited cultural variation, no questions with regards to educational or financial background
Recommendations: feelings of male partner

- First impressions set the tone
- Inclusion, as culturally appropriate
- Assess his previous experience with childbirth
- Acknowledge he may have multiple or conflicting feelings
- Discuss what is currently happening & what is expected to happen
Suggestions for future research

- Larger qualitative study
  - Does type of delivery impact feelings of fear?
  - Does birth order affect feelings of fear?

- Add questions regarding doula

- More diversity of participants needed

- Single male partners
  - Boyfriend
  - Father of the baby

- Offer survey in various settings
Thank you for listening