

“First-time mother syndrome”?

First-time mothers' information practices and their relationships with healthcare professionals

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Overview

- Research context
- Related work
- Research setting and methods
- Key findings
- Implications and value
- Further reading





Research context

- New mothers meet unfamiliar types of professional
- Little time to nurture trusting relationships
- Do mothers perceive a supporting or policing role?
- How may these tensions influence information practices?

(The Royal College of Midwives, 2013; Peckover, 2002)

Related work

- Actively seeking information seen as an important part of becoming prepared for motherhood
- Seeking bound up in beliefs about appropriate behaviour, even when expected and encouraged
- We have limited insight into mothers' information practices
- More generally, a deeper understanding is required of information practices in novel situations and relationships

(McKenzie, 2002; Berkule-Silberman *et al.*, 2010;
Shieh *et al.*, 2009; Fourie and Julien, 2014)

Research setting and methods

- 22 mothers
- Mother and baby group, in an area of deprivation
- Feminist perspectives of Urquhart and Yeoman (2010); influenced choice of group, narrative interviewing and participatory methods

Key findings



1

Conflicting information received from professionals

2

Certain pieces of information proved contentious

3

“First-time mother syndrome”;
many reported a fear of judgment

1. Conflicting information

You get so much conflicting as well, that's like even like from health visitors and midwives

They each tell you different things

[The doctor] said, you avoid putting them in a car seat after they've been fed, cos it crunches up the stomach. And then a couple of days later my health visitor said, oh put her in her car seat after she's been fed

You just don't know what to do!

2. Contentious issues

- Healthcare professionals bound by guidelines and legislation
- Thwarted mothers' information seeking; especially concerning feeding
- “Public policy climate has become much more restrictive of the access and exchange of information” (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008)

*[The midwife said] everybody here you will be breastfeeding, won't you?
And everybody went yeah... but I said, I'm not, I know I'm not.*

And she was like right... well I don't have an answer to your question.

*And I said well I'm sorry, but that's the information that you should have
and you should be aware of, and what I'm saying is I'm looking for that
information.*

*And obviously, I left there feeling pretty down, I've got to say... I was
made to feel really, really difficult.*

Mother recalling an antenatal class

first-time-mother-syndrome

tears doctors
know
judging worry
this paranoid
folk afraid down stuff talk
people
judge getting about
don't
information

3. Fear of judgment

- Many reported supportive relationships with healthcare professionals
- Particularly valued “realistic” advice
- Others worried that their parenting abilities were negatively judged

Fear of judgment → self protective behaviour

I think sometimes you're a bit not sure of asking about things in case they think... oh, worried mother, or paranoid mother

And it makes you think, nah

Mother on talking to her health visitor

Implications and value



- Showed fear of judgment profoundly influenced information practices
- Helps us understand why some sources of information, although considered important and useful, may be used little
- Both mothers and professionals experienced challenges to their information practices caused by the mandatory nature of health policies and regulations
- Raises the question of how to deal with a clash between a request for informational support and such rules?



Further reading



Wider study to be published as;

Loudon, K., Buchanan, S. and Ruthven, I. (in press). The everyday life information seeking behaviours of first-time mothers. *Journal of Documentation*. 72(1).

See also;

Loudon, K. (2014) Sharing stories: how libraries can help new parents live happily ever after. *CILIP blog* [online] 27th Nov 2014.

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