Coping strategies used by postnatal mothers with perceived stress

Sir,

Important life events such as childbirth often bring about a lot of stress, which requires coping and adaptation for the mothers. Moments after a stressful event lead to psychological trauma and have a traumatic perception. If the concerned individual had a good level of coping, the event that caused the stress will no
longer be stressful within a month. In contrast, mothers with a low level of coping may experience postpartum mood disorders.[1]

In the postnatal period, women are more vulnerable to depression affecting about 10%-20% of mothers during the 1st year after delivery. However, only 50% of women with the prominent symptom are diagnosed.[1]

Researchers found that certain variables can influence labor stress, such as null parity, low level of formal education, absence of antenatal education, and unexpected pregnancy.[2] Most of the postnatal mothers are not identified that they have symptoms of stress and are ignored which leads to postnatal depression.[3] The investigator investigated the different coping strategies used by postnatal mothers to overcome the stressors.

A descriptive study was conducted to assess the level of perceived stress among postnatal mothers and coping strategies used by them to overcome the stressors at Saveetha Medical College Hospital. The population consisted of postnatal mothers who have delivered both by vaginal and cesarean section within 6 weeks of postnatal period. Sample size was 60 postnatal mothers who met the inclusion criteria. The samples were selected by nonprobability consecutive sampling technique. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the institutional ethical committee. The investigator got formal permission from the head of the department. Data were collected after obtaining the consent from the postnatal mothers. Structured interview method was used to collect the demographical variables, level of stress was assessed by perceived stress scale, and brief cope scale was to assess the various coping strategies used by the postnatal mothers.[3,4] The data were analyzed by descriptive statistics.

The present study results show that 39 (65%) had mild stress, 15 (25%) had moderate stress, and 6 (10%) had severe stress. Based on the coping strategies used by the postnatal mothers are emotional coping strategies which was reported to be the most (mean = 3.57) compared to problem focus strategies (mean = 2.24). There was a significant association between emotional coping strategies and health status of the baby ($P > 0.05$).

Studies related to perceived stress reveal that majority had mild stress, and there was statistically significant association with level of perceived stress among postnatal mothers with type of family and parity at $P > 0.05$.[5] Majority of the mothers were using problem-focused engagement as a coping strategy. Emotional coping strategies were reported to be the most used by mothers (mean = 4.77 ± 0.70). There was a significant association between problem-focused coping strategies and race ($P = 0.045$), where it was mostly used by Malay participants (mean = 3.39 ± 0.46).[5]

The present study suggests that psychological support from partner, family members, and nurses is needed to reduce stress and to implement various coping strategies to improve health among postnatal mothers. Continuing nursing education based on coping strategies is needed for the nurses to educate the postnatal mothers during their stay in the hospital to overcome stressors and to cope up with stress so as to prevent postnatal depression and postnatal psychosis.

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Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

Jagadeeswari Jayaseelan, M. Prathap Mohan
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecological Nursing, Saveetha College of Nursing, SIMATS, ‘Saveetha Medical Centre, SIMATS, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: j.jagadeeswari@gmail.com

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