Abstract

Waterbirth is becoming increasingly popular in the United States and women value the opportunity to have a choice in their birthing method. The purpose of this research is to evaluate how waterbirth affects patient satisfaction and the safety of the mother and neonate compared to the traditional delivery model in unmedicated labor patients. A search for literature was conducted in CINAHL and PubMed databases using keywords waterbirth, waterbirth outcomes, waterbirth safety, and waterbirth satisfaction. Eight research articles which evaluated the safety and patient satisfaction of waterbirth were chosen to be reviewed. Overall, it was found that waterbirth shortens the first and second stage of labor, decreases perineal trauma, elicits positive experiences for the laboring woman, and does not increase the incidence of poor outcomes in the neonate.

Methods/EBP

Eight articles with current and relevant information about waterbirth were found using keywords like waterbirth, waterbirth outcomes, waterbirth safety, and waterbirth satisfaction through the Pennsylvania State University libraries website. CINAHL and PubMed databases were accessed and the key words were entered. To narrow the results, “[i]” was typed after the keywords to make sure those words were in the title of the research. This greatly reduced the number of articles and aided in choosing specific literature that applied to the purpose of this research. To select the data, the articles that came up with the key word searches were read over for their reliability and quality of the content. As a result, the data used in this research was eight research articles with reliable and current information about waterbirth outcomes, safety, and satisfaction compared to that of the traditional birthing in bed.

Summary of Literature Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Country/Rights</th>
<th>Evidence Level/Synthesis of Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Overall Evidence Synthesis

Qualitatively, women who chose waterbirth had more positive birth experiences. The quantitative studies we reviewed compared the outcomes of mothers and newborns following waterbirth and traditional birth with similar or equivalent medical conditions. The studies displayed that women who chose waterbirth were older and more educated than their conventional birth counterparts. With the exception of some outliers, the most consistent outcome results included a decreased incidence of perineal tears, blood loss, and hemorrhage in women that had a waterbirth. The studies also suggested that water immersion during birth sped up the first and second stages of labor. One study did suggest that neonates born in the water had lower Apgar scores and an increased incidence of hospitalization for feeding issues. However, all of the other studies found waterbirth to pose no additional risks to neonates because no major differences in overall neonatal outcomes were noted.

Results

Waterbirth is becoming increasingly popular in the United States and women value the opportunity to have a choice in their birthing method. The purpose of this research is to evaluate how waterbirth affects patient satisfaction and the safety of the mother and neonate compared to the traditional delivery model.

Based on the evidence, it can be concluded that waterbirth does not pose an increased risk for both the neonate or the mother. In fact, the evidence supports that waterbirth is associated with a lower risk of maternal and neonatal trauma and a decrease in maternal blood loss. In addition, mothers who gave birth in water reported an overall more positive birth experience. Therefore, this literature review supports that hospitals should gather further information to implement a policy to allow mothers the option of a waterbirth.

Recommendations

Conclusions

There is a limited amount of evidence regarding waterbirth due to the lack of policy surrounding it. It is important that waterbirth be researched more extensively through randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to allow for the most accurate conclusion to be drawn from research. That may be difficult in the local area due to the small population and lack of participation. However, it is possible to at least conduct further research on a national level in more urban areas. Should further research indicate that waterbirth offers a safe and satisfactory delivery option to mothers and their babies, steps can be taken to implement policies in hospitals that allow waterbirth as an option for expectant mothers.

References


Birthing in water is protective against the occurrence of non degree perineal avulsion. Women who had a waterbirth had a lower degree of genital tract trauma compared to the traditional birthing in bed.

Effectiveness of Waterbirth

Audrey Glassmyer, Ashlyn Ellis, Meghan Duniak NURS 200W

Advisor: Dr. Unger & Dr. Orndorf

Stakeholders: Amy Farner & Shelby Oliver

Background & Problem(s)

Waterbirth has been used since the 1970s for its effectiveness in helping women cope with the pain of labor and allowing the neonate to transition peacefully out of the womb (Branning, 2017). Recently, there has been a growth in the body of pregnant women interested in waterbirth. This spike of interest requires the need for more research on the safety of waterbirth and the implementation of policies within hospitals. According to the Department of Health, in 2018, 1,728 babies were born in Franklin County (2018). This number shows there is a large population of women in Franklin County giving birth and in need of information about safe birthing options.

Gathering more information on the effects of waterbirth and the traditional bedbirth can help healthcare professionals provide mothers with education on safe and effective delivery methods. Women deserve to be aware of all of the birthing options available to them and the benefits of each one. Allowing women to choose their birthing method gives them a sense of empowerment and improves their overall birth experience.

The goal of this research is to inform healthcare professionals about positive effects of waterbirth and to identify the safest and most satisfactory birthing method. Therefore, the question guiding this study is, “In unmedicated labor patients, how does waterbirth affect patient satisfaction and safety of the mother and baby compared to the traditional delivery model?”