

Satisfaction of Pregnant Women in an Obstetric Ultrasound Unit During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Satisfação das Grávidas numa Unidade de Ecografia Obstétrica Durante a Pandemia COVID-19

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Palavras-chave: COVID-19; Obstetrícia; Pandemia; Satisfação do Doente; Ultrassonografia

Dear Editor,

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that we, as society, can adapt to different circumstances. As health care providers, we faced new challenges and changes to our clinical practice.

Obstetric care was not an exception, and pregnant women had to readjust their expectations to the new rules, namely the obligation to wear masks and the fact that the presence of partners during visits to the hospital, including during ultrasound scans, was restricted.

Obstetric care is one of the most important indicators of every healthcare system. When evaluating the quality of obstetric care, maternal and neonatal outcomes are often the only data included, but women's satisfaction should play a role in this evaluation.^{1,2} Satisfaction is a very complex concept, since it depends on women's expectations and environmental circumstances.³⁻⁵

Due to the pandemic, the satisfaction of pregnant women during obstetric ultrasound might have fallen short. This is the reason why we conducted a prospective observational cohort study to assess the satisfaction of pregnant

women during obstetric ultrasound scans between March and May 2020.

We elaborated a survey that aimed to capture women's experiences during routine ultrasounds and to identify factors that could have affected those experiences. We included 115 women that were divided in two groups according to their global satisfaction: 'Very good experience' (64%) and 'Less than very good experience' (36%).

Safety and quality of communication were the two main factors affecting satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite all the restraints experienced during the pandemic, 85% of women in the 'Very good experience' group felt very safe (vs 17.1%, p - value < 0.001). Although we could not find statistical significance, women in the 'Less than very good experience' group stated more frequently that wearing masks made communication with professionals more difficult (36.6% vs 28.4%, p - value 0.103). This group also considered that their partner's presence was particularly important for them (95.1% vs 86.5%, p - value 0.327) as well as for their partners (95.1% vs 90.5%, p - value 0.604), especially when deciding over invasive tests.

The majority of these women had a very good experience when coming to the hospital for obstetric ultrasound scans despite the restrictions in place.

The satisfaction of patients is associated with higher therapeutic compliance, better outcomes and lower litigation.³ By studying women's expectations towards their obstetric care, health policies can be improved, and ultimately contribute to a better health care system.

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