POSTNATAL CARE: CHECKING THE STITCHES

Development of a midwifery-led postnatal clinic with expertise gained from more than 150 early secondary perineal repairs. Experiences from Aarhus University Hospital in Denmark.

Background

Aarhus University Hospital has implemented a new midwifery-led postnatal service that includes an examination of perineal wound healing. A group of specially trained midwives conduct early secondary repair if it is found that wounds have been insufficiently repaired or if there has been an underdiagnosis of perineal trauma.

Workflow

All women who have given birth vaginally are offered a postnatal examination of wound healing 48-78 hours after birth, as part of the routine postnatal maternal and baby health check.

A Visual Analogue Scale is used to evaluate pain. The REEDA tool is used to evaluate wound healing. Patient satisfaction is evaluated by visual inspection, either by using a mirror or taking a photo of the healing area.

Results

After we began to screen all women with perineal injury, we found that approximately 2-4% were candidates for early secondary perineal repair. A guideline was developed in order to ensure uniformity in decision-making and patient treatment.

Key focus areas for clinical improvement in postpartum perineal repair were identified. Hands-on workshops in basic surgical skills and for diagnosing perineal trauma are now available for all staff members on a monthly basis. If required, individual supervision is possible for midwives or doctors during perineal repair procedures, 24 hours / 7 days a week.

Conclusion

Diagnosis and primary perineal repair is successfully performed on more than 95% of all patients after vaginal birth. In cases of insufficiently sutured wounds, it is possible to perform an early secondary repair within the first week post partum with good results.

References