TRADITIONAL POSTPARTUM PRACTICES AMONG VIETNAMESE MOTHERS: A STUDY IN ANTHI DISTRICT, HUNGYEN PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

In Vietnam, traditional postpartum practices culturally exist among the postpartum mothers after returning from the health facility. This is an ethnography research aimed to explore the traditional postpartum practices among Vietnamese mothers and to analyze how socio-cultural factors influencing these practices. This is a qualitative study using in-depth interviews, informal interview and participated observation techniques in Anthi district, HungYen province. Twenty postpartum mothers within four months after delivery were interviewed. Six family members of the postpartum women and three health workers were also involved in the study to get more information.

It was found that there are a variety traditional postpartum practices that mothers follow. These practices are related to diet prescription and prohibition, rest, bath and shampoo restriction, sexual abstinence and other spiritual practices. The adherence to the traditional cultural postpartum practices lasted 25 to 100 days. These practices are based on curative and preventive beliefs. However, according to biomedical classification, these practices can be divided into beneficial, neutral and potentially harmful ones.

Traditional postpartum practices still dominant in contemporary Vietnamese cultures. These practices are influenced by cultural and social factors. Local beliefs, customs, and the lay referral significant female relatives play key roles in recommending these behaviors. Gender factor is revealed as a key role in adhering to the practices.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are made for designing and providing the appropriate safe motherhood health programs and further research. The recommendations include changing the views of health professionals toward client cultures, considering how biomedicine can complement traditional practices, providing information, and educating women the benefits of contemporary postpartum care and strategies to help them to integrate their beliefs and modern ways of care. Recommendations for further research include study with a broader target population and research to find out the long term effects of traditional postpartum practices on mother and child health.

KEY WORDS: TRADITIONAL POSTPARTUM PRACTICES/ VIETNAMESE MOTHERS / ETHNOGRAPHY.

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