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Cultural Diversity Paper: Hispanic Culture

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Hispanic Culture

Introduction

Hispanics come from an inclusive culture in which group activities are dominant, individuals share responsibilities, and accountability is collective. Hispanics follow and believe in the Catholic faith, which is not against birth control; thus, they follow the beliefs related to family planning to prevent pregnancy. In addition, Hispanics support friends or family members who had an abortion. This paper focuses on exploring the cultural beliefs of Hispanic people related to family planning, abortion, pregnancy, labor/ delivery, newborn care, and postpartum care.

Family Planning

Hispanic women, including both US-born and non-US born, follow the Catholic faith, which supports the use of Natural family planning to prevent pregnancy. Hispanics encourage and embrace early pregnancy and believe birth control is unnecessary until a decent family size is achieved. In addition, the cultural beliefs of Hispanics revolve around individuals committing to the family unit rather than themselves. In addition, Hispanic men are expected to protect their families' honor and welfare, thus explaining why they have a lower probability of using some birth control methods such as vasectomy (Rodriguez & Fehring 2012). They also have traditional beliefs which forbid sex outside marriage and the use of any form of birth control, including condoms. Generally, many Hispanic families, especially those from the Mexican and Dominican cultures, view children as a blessing from God and are less likely to use birth control methods. In some Hispanic cultures, like the Cuban culture, there is also a stigma associated with family

planning, with some believing that it is only used by those who cannot afford to have children. Women may also feel pressure to have children to maintain their role and status in the family.

Pregnancy

During the pregnancy period, the pregnant woman is exposed to various practices. One of the traditional prescriptions involves the vapor baths or the temazcal baths, which involves the pregnant woman being exposed to one of the baths believing in eliminating the toxic products through sweating, thus cleansing her properly. The bath consists of the woman going to a small bathhouse that looks like an igloo but is made of adobe, whereby water is poured on hot stones. Then it is believed that the steam cleanses the woman. The hot bath is connected with the "hot" pregnancy state, thus cleansing the woman from all negative influences. This practice is mainly followed in Mexican culture. The second practice is ser sobada which means the woman having a massage, usually done by a curandero, a traditional healer (Maldonado-Duran et al., 2002). This practice involves the pregnant woman having a massage while manipulating her abdomen, believing that the baby will stay in the proper position, thus preparing for delivery (Vail, 2019). In addition, Hispanics thought that the woman would experience challenges during delivery by not getting the massage. The third practice involves the pregnant woman always taking "hot foods," not necessarily regarding the temperature, but regarding a healthy diet to ensure a healthy pregnancy. In addition, hot was associated with essential food characteristics. Puerto Rican culture follows this culture on the foods that should be eaten and that which should not. They believe in eating traditional foods and avoiding some activities. For example, they thought the chicken was hot while some fruits were cold. The pregnant woman was supposed to have a hot state since the Hispanics believed in balancing between the states and the touches of humor.

Labor/Delivery

One of the cultural practices after the woman delivers is La Cuarentena which involves the woman being secluded for forty days after delivering her baby. During seclusion, the woman should be given special care from a mother figure. In addition, during the seclusion period, the woman is not expected to work physically, eat some "cold foods," and get exposed to air drafts. However, this is only possible if the woman has someone taking care of her and if she has other children depending on her to take care of them. The second practice after delivery is co-sleeping, whereby the baby and the mother are expected to sleep together or with both parents to establish a strong connection and bond. The third practice is covering the umbilical cord with a band of clothing after birth to prevent the baby from developing an umbilical hernia. In addition, this practice also involves burying the placenta near the house and the umbilical cord stump nearby after falling off from the baby. If the umbilical cord area began reddening, the mother and the grandmother would apply a concoction of some herbs using a piece of clothing.

Postpartum Care

One of the practices during postpartum is Palabras de Bendición which involves family and friends coming together to offer words of blessing and encouragement to the new mother. This practice is believed to give the mother strength and courage as she begins her journey as a parent. Second, the woman is expected to focus on her health and refrain from performing any tiring activities or home chores. This practice is involved in the cuarentena, the 40 days seclusion period. It is believed that cuarentena helps the mother recover more quickly while protecting her and her baby from potential illness. This is practiced mainly by the Mexican culture as they believe in the importance of relaxation for the mother after giving birth. Many families practice cuarentena to keep the mother and baby healthy and safe. Third, the woman should avoid eating

"cold foods" and not be exposed to air drafts. The woman is expected to eat hot foods to help in improving her health and well-being.

Newborn Care

Hispanic families always consider children as vulnerable and dependent; thus, they regard the baby as a gift, making them believe that a baby may be a source of good luck to the family. The second practice related to caring for the newborn is that the baby should be breastfed on demand; thus, the mother should prioritize the baby's needs and overlook her needs (Gross et al., 2019). In addition, mothers are expected to conceal their breasts while feeding the baby since it is considered a private activity. Puerto Rican culture emphasizes the importance of breastfeeding the newborn. The third practice is co-sleeping, whereby the baby should sleep with the mother or both parents. Co-sleeping is highly valued in many Hispanic cultures. It is a way for the parents to be close to their child and provide security and comfort. Co-sleeping can also be beneficial for breastfeeding and bonding. Cuban culture emphasizes the significance of the mother bonding with the baby. Families of Hispanic descent are more comfortable with their child sleeping in the same bed as them or even in the same room if it meets safety standards.

Recommendations

Based on the different beliefs and cultural practices, it is recommended that healthcare providers focus on providing culturally sensitive healthcare rather than overlooking the traditional beliefs and cultural practices of different cultures. Nurses should establish culturally sensitive patient care, including the elements of different cultures, such as Hispanics, and their values, beliefs, and cultural practices. In addition, nurses should focus on creating awareness about the different forms of natural family planning and their effectiveness. They should

respectfully educate families about the different contraception options and the benefits of birth control. Creating awareness about birth control would be significant for these families as it would help them prevent unwanted or unplanned pregnancies. Nurses should also provide culturally sensitive and informed care to Hispanic patients and families related to family planning, pregnancy, labor/delivery, postpartum care, and newborn care. It would also be recommended that nurses promote and advocate for breastfeeding as the primary nutrition source for the newborn since this benefits the baby and the mother by improving their cognitive and physical development. In addition, nurses should encourage breastfeeding as it helps in development, better bonding between mother and baby, and improved immunity. It is also important to emphasize the importance of co-sleeping for Hispanic families, as it has been proven beneficial for bonding and breastfeeding. Nurses are also responsible for promoting healthy habits during pregnancy, such as healthy eating, and helping primary care providers promote beneficial results.

Additionally, nurses should encourage unlimited opportunities for the mother and the newborn to bond and breastfeed after delivery. Based on the practices and beliefs of the Hispanics, nurses should encourage that after delivery, the woman should be accompanied by someone in the first 24 hours to ensure they respond to any complications in either the mother or the baby. In addition, nurses should educate women and families on the significance of post-natal examinations.

Conclusion

The Hispanic culture strongly values and prioritizes family and the community, as shown through their beliefs in different concepts, including family planning, abortion, pregnancy, labor and delivery, newborn care, and postpartum care. Their traditional practices are relevant to their

culture as they help support the mother throughout the pregnancy journey to delivery and recovery. This culture of support and shared responsibility is integral to Hispanic culture and should be respected and valued.

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