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## Benefits for the father from their involvement in the labour and birth sequence

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### Abstract

The link between father and child is fundamental, the presence of the former in the birthing room being essential to closer links between the triad. The purpose of this study is to identify the benefits for the father from their involvement during the labor and birth sequence. An integrational review of the literature was carried out together with research on the databases: PubMed, LILACS, SciELO, Institutional Holdings and Digital Libraries and EBSCO Host published between 2000 e 2014. The results demonstrate the existence of a 'new' father who is involved in the consultations during the pregnancy and preparations for the birth, his presence in the birthing room making him feel that he is playing an active part in the process encourages him to develop closer and more intimate links leading to a consolidation of the family unit, the assumption of a parental role in addition to being able to share the experience of the birth with the mother and contribute to her well-being. The team of health professionals has a crucial role in the integration of the father into the process of maternity with his presence also being reflected in the humanization of health care.

It may be concluded that there are many benefits from paternal involvement in the birth when accompanying the mother from the moment of pregnancy with an active presence during the birth and enjoying the entire process by sharing emotions and feelings and contributing to the humanization of care and an affective link between the triad.

The performance of the Specialist Nursing Staff in the areas of Maternal health and Obstetrics is reflected in the inclusion of the father in the birthing room and in the de-mythification of taboos.

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## 1. Introduction

The birth of a child is an event of great significance for the parents. It is taken as a turning point in the life of the couple, the arrival of the parenthood stage, a new situation which arrives with fears, expectations and the assumption of new roles.

In the past the male figure was associated with their work outside of the home and that of the mother confined to work in the home and the care of the children and therefore the functions assumed by fathers and mothers were traditionally distinct (Oliveira et al 2009).

The mother performed the role of care-giver while the father took care of the material needs of the family. The father was often a distant figure of authority who was largely unconcerned with the care to be given to the children and leaving the mother as the affective reference for the children (Oliveira et al 2009).

These roles were further reinforced at the time of birth which once took place in a family environment with the help of other women, midwives or godmothers who had empirical knowledge of the birthing process (Antunes et al 2014).

Gradually and over time a transfer of the birthing process to a hospital context has been witnessed. Women began to seek out health professionals and in particular doctors as these were believed to be able to provide greater security at the time of birth rather than the midwives of the past (Santos & Shimo 2008).

As a result of this change, one of the most significant losses was the support of the family. With the institutionalization of the birthing process, the mother became the subject of interaction with the team of health professionals, obstetric assistance being marked by technical care through the use of technology (Motta 2015).

Subsequent to this uprooting, the mother began to experience the moment of giving birth surrounded by strangers and far from the family environment. As a result the need arose for bringing a significant other person into the hospital environment so that the mother would feel herself accompanied and supported during the event which, in addition to being highly physical and emotional, brings about substantial transformations.

The support of a significant other can be crucial in the memories which the mother will retain at such a complex time in her life due to the process of labor and giving birth to a child. If all of this support brings many physical and emotional benefits to the mother by making her feel calmer in the knowledge that there is someone who is a support and can be depended upon during the birth and at such a delicate moment, the father as a significant other is also present and thus can benefit from an experience which previously was unthinkable.

For the father, the right to witness the birth of his child was not recognized although this practice has changed over recent decades through their desire to remain at the side of their partner, not just as a spectator but also as an active participant in living through this unique experience (Garcés 2011).

In Portugal it was in June 1985 that the pregnant mother was granted the right to be accompanied during labor by the decree-law number 14/85. It was this legal measure that encouraged the inclusion of the father at the time of the birth so that he became a central figure along with the mother and the baby waiting to be born and becoming an integral part of the birth of the child.

The father of the child may be considered to be an ideal companion for the mother during labor due to factors such as the forming of a bond and the representation of family links, as having witnessed the birth of the child affirms their parenthood and values their parental role (Storti 2004).

The current conception of paternity as understood by Carvalho & Brito (2008) establishes that, in addition to the father having greater closeness to the child, they are an active participant not only at the conception but also during the pregnancy, birth and postpartum.

It was stated by He et al (2015) that there are factors which can change the opinion and the experience of the parents during the moment of birth including age, education, employment and the existence of any previous visit to

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