



What should a website dedicated to the postnatal period contain? A Delphi survey among parents and professionals



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ABSTRACT

Objectives: Mothers have a great need for information during the postnatal period. Trying to meet this need, mothers are increasingly turning to the Internet. Nevertheless, many women have stated that they often or always found that the information that they found on the Internet was incomplete or wrong. Many women therefore believe that health professionals should suggest reliable Internet websites for new mothers. The aim of this study was therefore to find a consensus on the content of a reliable and centralized website dedicated to mothers from the end of pregnancy to 1 year after childbirth.

Design: Two rounds of an online Delphi survey were used in this study.

Setting and participants: The panel of participants involved in the survey included parents (both mothers and fathers) and professionals (health professionals and professionals of early childhood for mothers of children aged 0 to 2 years).

Findings: Ninety-six parents and professionals participated in the first round (37.7 ± 9.76 years; 84.4% of women) and 78 in the second round. The majority of participants (94.6%) thought that a centralized website could help mothers from pregnancy to one year after childbirth. The content that the experts would like to find on a website were themed into five categories: “infants’ information”, “parents’ information”, “administrative information”, “professionals’ information” and “type of resources”. In each category, experts highlighted the key words that they found important and should be reported on the website. The most important items highlighted by participants were baby’s feeding/breastfeeding (92.8%), babies’ needs (84.1%), baby blues (77.9%), postpartum depression (72.1%), management of the couple’s relationship (72.1%), women’s right to postnatal care (83.6%), links to reliable documents (63.9%) and a list of useful contacts (52.5%).

Conclusions: This study helped to understand the questions that mothers ask themselves during the postpartum period and provided priorities to respond to their questions in the process of developing a website.

Introduction

The decision to have a baby brings significant change to a woman's life. The transition to motherhood is a potentially vulnerable time for mothers' mental health (Faisal-Cury et al., 2008; Gavin et al., 2005;

Monti et al., 2008; Henderson, 2015). Women often have many fears and anxieties regarding early motherhood and their changing role (Forster et al., 2008). The first weeks and months after childbirth also create new needs for mothers. A previous study performed in our department (Slomian et al., 2017c) evaluated the needs of mothers in

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the first year after childbirth. Four categories of needs were highlighted: a need for information, need for psychological support, need to share experiences and need for practical and material support. Indeed, the need for information after childbirth seems to be omnipresent (Emmanuel et al., 2001; Sword and Watt, 2005). After childbirth, 9 out of 10 women admitted to searching for information about themselves or about their baby (Slomian et al., 2017a). New mothers felt unprepared for the realities of motherhood (especially women having their first baby) (Carolan, 2007; Deave et al., 2008; Javadifar et al., 2016) and searched for reliable and realistic information. During the first year after childbirth, women need to be surrounded, reassured and understood (McKellar et al., 2006; Hildingsson, 2007). They need to find information to be better prepared for this difficult period of life to comfort them and, particularly, to know if they are doing well as mothers and to find out if what they are experiencing is normal.

In an effort to meet their information needs during the postnatal period, mothers are increasingly turning to the Internet (Romano, 2007; Lagan et al., 2011). Nevertheless, many women have stated that they 'often' or 'always' found that the information that they found on the Internet was incomplete or wrong (Slomian et al., 2017a). Women also seem to use the Internet to make decisions and manage their postpartum period (Forkner-Dunn, 2003; Dickerson et al., 2004; Lagan et al., 2010; Slomian et al., 2017a). Some studies have demonstrated that information and communication technologies (ICT) could be effective in the management of the postpartum period (Lindberg et al., 2009; Salonen et al., 2011; Danbjørg et al., 2015). Many women therefore believe that health professionals should suggest reliable Internet websites for new mothers (Slomian et al., 2017a). Given the recent evidence supporting this claim, our department conducted focus groups to try to find one or more adapted technological solutions to meet the needs of mothers during the first year following childbirth (Slomian et al., 2017b). The results showed that although the human and psychological components remain very important in the postpartum period, ICT and new technologies could be a great ally for meeting the needs of mothers during the postpartum period as well as to reliably inform mothers. At the end of this study, we decided to explore and test one of the technologies discussed during the focus group, especially to meet the information need of mothers. We therefore chose to develop a centralised website dedicated to mothers from the end of pregnancy to 1 year after childbirth.

Given the responses in the second phase of the study, it indicated that the development of a centralised website dedicated to mothers during the postnatal period is not simple. The content must be accurately defined to answer mothers' needs. Hence, in the same way that it is important to respect the content validity in the development of questionnaires (Terwee et al., 2007), we think that it is important to include future users during the development of a website (users' experiences methods) to better meet their expectations and needs. The aim of this study was therefore to find a consensus about the content that users would like to find on a centralised website dedicated to mothers from the end of pregnancy to 1 year after childbirth.

Methods

Study design

We conducted an online Delphi consensus process to identify the main items and resources to include on a website dedicated to mothers and to try to meet their needs. The Delphi method (developed by the RAND Corporation) is a prospective method that consists of consulting a panel of experts in an iterative way. A typical Delphi method utilises a series of at least two rounds of questions until a consensus is reached. After each round, a synthesis of the results is used as the basis for drafting the following questionnaire, allowing for 'controlled feedback'. This study received ethics approval from the 'Comité d'Ethique Hospitalo-Facultaire Universitaire de Liège' under the number 2015/48.

Participants

In this study, we consider the views of parents (both mothers and fathers) and professionals. The professionals included in this study were health professionals and professionals of early childhood serving mothers of children aged 0 to 2 years. The categories of professionals included in this study were: gynecologists, midwives, pediatricians, general practitioners, psychologists, Medical-Social Worker of the ONE ('Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance': Belgian Office of Birth and Childhood), nursery nurses and physiotherapists. Some technological experts were also invited to participate in this Delphi survey.

There are no clear recommendations regarding the number of participants required to construct a representative sample for a Delphi survey. This number generally varies between 8 and 20, but can also reach a few hundred participants (Keeney et al., 2011; Cadorin et al., 2017). As the aim of this study was to identify the main items that should be found on a website dedicated to mothers, we choose to include a large sample of people and hoped to include at least 60 participants (almost 30 parents and 30 professionals). Therefore, we invited a large number of experts, both parents and professionals, to participate in our Delphi survey. Professionals were contacted on account of their specialty. The professionals' e-mail addresses were collected from the two largest hospitals in the city of Liège (Belgium) as well as from professionals who had previously been in contact with our research team and who matched the inclusion criteria. Parents were contacted to participate in the study if they already had at least one child or will have one (pregnancy). Parents' e-mail addresses were collected from parents who had previously been in contact with our research team and who matched the inclusion criteria as well as by word of mouth. All of the invited experts had the ability to nominate additional participants. In addition, the experts who were interested in the study – and who were not yet invited to participate in the study – could send an e-mail to the research team. After evaluating the expertise of the candidate, researchers added these new experts to the survey.

Delphi survey

The process used in this study included two phases, which were conducted between 19 June 2016 and 30 September 2016 using the Mesydel® Software:

Phase 1 (19 June 2016): Participants were asked to evaluate the interest of such a website for mothers and to comment with their opinion. Then, the experts were asked to evaluate the interest of such a website to professionals serving mothers of children aged 0–2 years and to comment with their opinion. We also asked participants to describe the content that they would like to find on such a website. Finally, experts were asked to list the existing websites on which they could find reliable information and to mention which of these websites they already recommended to mothers and/or professionals.

Phase 2 (22 August 2016): First, we shared a synthesis of the results of the first survey with the participants. The content that the experts would like to find on a website was distributed in five categories (infants, parents, administrative, professionals and resources). In each of these categories, a list of key words was constructed regarding the responses to Phase 1 of the Delphi survey.

For the first four categories (infants, parents, administrative and professionals), participants were asked to decide if it is very important, important, not very important or not important at all. The panel was then asked to highlight, in each category, all of the key words that they find important to report on a website. Participants also had the opportunity to add items if they did not find them in the list of key words. For the fifth category, experts were asked to select at least 3 resources that they would like to find on a website. They also had the opportunity to add some resources if they did not find them in the presented list. Finally, all of the websites that the experts said that they

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