

"First Steps": A Resident-run Postpartum Support Group for Young Mothers

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Background

Young mothers have unique postpartum needs. They are more likely to suffer from:

- Depression
- Social isolation
- Lack of confidence in parenting

Their needs include:

- A supportive social network
- Education about childcare and postpartum care

Purpose

A group of residents, medical students, and faculty developed a support group which aims to:

- Foster independence
- Promote self-esteem and healthy coping skills
- Enable new mothers to learn from each other and from health professionals
- Develop new friendships
- Recognize postpartum depression

Topics for discussion have included:

- Child health (nutrition, discipline, illness, normal development, safety)
- Maternal health (contraception, sexuality, exercise, nutrition)
- Local resources

Methods

Participants are:

- Young mothers and their children
- Recruited through flyers and physician recommendations

Our Group:

- Meets once a month at our resident clinic
- Discusses a topic chosen by the group
- Provides educational materials and a gift related to the topic
- Provides snacks and scrapbooking materials

Evaluation:

- Focus group
- 18 item questionnaire



"Having other moms to talk to is invaluable to me. It's great to have a time set aside each month to celebrate and be supported as a mom...It makes me proud to be a mom."
-D.B., First Steps mom

"I had very high hopes for this group and I was not disappointed...I expected support, advice, and friends, and I found all three."
-J.B., First Steps mom

"The good thing [about this group] is that I wasn't afraid to say how I felt...and now I feel a whole lot better, more comfortable."
-J.E., First Steps mom



Results

Attendance:

- 18 meetings since October of 2007
- Average of 4 mothers per meeting
- Range of 0-7 mothers per meeting
- All mothers came with 1-2 children

Focus group held April of 2009:

- 3 mothers participated in focus group
- 18 question survey and group discussion
- Questions covered support, confidence, knowledge, and group evaluation

Common focus group themes:

- Provided a safe, open, non-judgmental environment
- Fostered a sense of friendship and support not found elsewhere
- Improved knowledge of community resources, infant feeding, and safety
- Allowed more time to interact with physicians
- Improved confidence in parenting
- Desired more frequent meetings with more mothers

Discussion

Major achievements:

- Created a new resource for postpartum women in an underserved community
- Had only positive feedback from members
- Strengthened primary care relationships
- Improved social development of children
- Enhanced social connectedness of mothers with postpartum depression

Next Steps

- Reach out to more mothers in the community
- Create sustainability through resident training

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