

Ms Lyndall MOLLART and Ms Marian BULLARD

Central Coast Health, NSW.

Changing Practice And Improving Care: Midwives And Families.

Abstract

It has been identified by numerous government reports and research that utilising a prenatal psychosocial assessment improves postpartum outcomes for families. At Wyong Hospital Maternity Services (Central Coast Health, NSW) we recognised we were initiating crisis management during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period in response to inadequate detection and referral for women and their families. In addition, Wyong area has one of the highest levels of teenage pregnancy and child protection and domestic violence reports.

In the quest for patient care improvement and practice development, a working party was developed with key stakeholders in late 2001. Utilising the quality circle approach, the working party identified clinical practice issues and service gaps; developed strategies and mechanisms to bridge the gaps; implemented the strategies; and evaluated the practice improvements. The major strategy was the innovative approach of integrating a psychosocial assessment within the existing hospital antenatal care, which commenced at the first “booking in” appointment. The midwives participated in a two day education program prior to the introduction of the new “parenting card”.

The benefits for women and their families include early identification of issues; timely referral to appropriate services and support networks; pregnancy and discharge care planning with relevant service providers; high priority referral to Early Childhood services; and the opportunity for health professionals and mothers to be more engaged in discussing life issues that may impact on parenting. Evaluation of the implemented change of practice and considerations of implications for routine practice will be presented. This report of creative practice improvement is being presented for the first time.

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