

Integrative Health Strategies in Postpartum Women:

A Review of the Literature

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Background and Significance

Becoming a mother is a major life event that is accompanied by major physical and emotional changes.

- Approximately 10-20% of US mothers experience mental health problems such as depression or anxiety in their infant's first year of life, and it is estimated that greater than half of these mothers are not identified by healthcare professionals (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021).
- Other women experience increased levels of anxiety and stress, but do not meet diagnostic criteria for mental illness.
- Poor maternal mental health has adverse effects on the mother and interactions with her newborn and partner (Dubber et al., 2015; Ludermit et al., 2010).

Integrative Health Strategies

People are turning to mind and body approaches more than ever before (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, [NCCAM], 2021)

- 1.1% of total health care expenditures and 9.2% of out-of-pocket health care spending went towards complementary health approaches (NCCAM, 2021)
- Over 40% of the American public used health care practices that fell outside of Western (conventional) medicine and Americans spent \$30.2 billion on out-of-pocket expenses for these resources (NCCAM, 2021)
- Insurance carriers throughout the country are increasing coverage to include both conventional and CAM modalities because of the public demand for broader healthcare services, graphs and images to this section.

Methodology

PICO Question

Among postpartum women, what are the best practices for integrative health strategies to promote well-being?

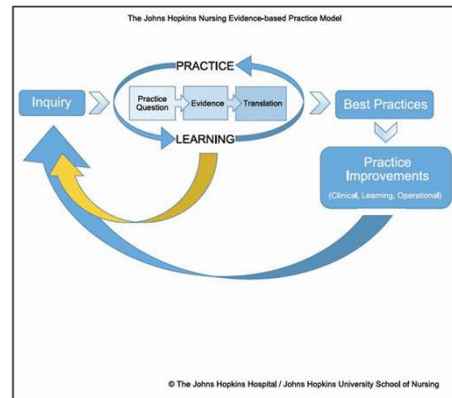
Evidence-Based Practice Model

The Johns Hopkins Nursing Model for Evidence-Based Practice (JHNEBP) (Dane & Dearholt, 2017) guided this literature search, as part of an overall Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) initiative to assess and improve postpartum women's health using integrative strategies.

Search Strategy:

PubMed
CINAHL
Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
EBSCO

Keywords: "Postpartum," AND "Wellness," OR "Integrative health," OR "Integrative medicine," OR "Complementary or Alternative Medicine."



Evidence Summary

Routine Postpartum Care

Postpartum care does not routinely occur at regular intervals, as it does during pregnancy.

- Additional guidance and resources needed for new mothers
- Regular visits and care recommended (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [ACOG], 2018).

Postpartum Health Concerns and Risks

- Baby blues vs. postpartum depression
- Tobacco relapse (Verbiest et al., 2016)
- "Litmus test" for chronic disease including hypertension, gestational diabetes, cardiac issues, and obesity (Verbiest et al., 2016)
- Postpartum visit and access to care issues (ACOG, 2018)
- U.S. focus on infant vs. care of mother

Integrative Strategies for Postpartum Depression and Sleep Disturbance

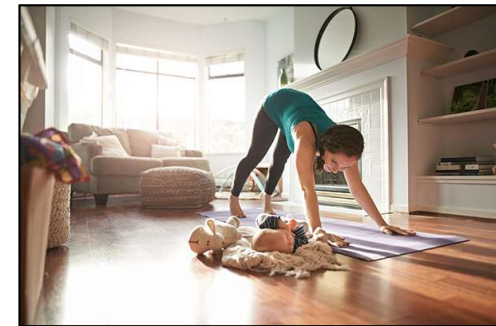
- Expressive writing activities (Blasio et al., 2015)
- Tea and sleep (Chang & Chen, 2016)
- Yoga (Buttner et al., 2015)
- Bright light therapy (Lee et al., 2013)
- Acupuncture (Yang et al., 2018)

Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Well-Being

- Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, 1990)
- MBSR adapted to a ten-session mindfulness-based childbirth and parenting program (Bardacke, 2012)
- Considerable variation in mindfulness-based interventions, in terms of form, duration, study design, and high drop out rates of mind-body interventions (Cull, 2018)

Results & Conclusion

This review of the literature identified numerous gaps in the literature. Wide variation in study design, small sample size, and significant attrition rates are present across studies. Additional focus on wellness needed.



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