

Women's experiences of having had, and recovered from, eclampsia at a tertiary hospital in Tanzania

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Abstract

Background

Eclampsia is a major cause of maternal and perinatal mortality that requires advanced care and long hospital stays with uncertain outcomes for mother and baby. Care of eclamptic women is particularly challenging in low-income settings. Standards for medical care for eclampsia are established but the psychosocial needs of women are under-researched.

Aim

To explore and describe women's experiences of having had, and recovered from, eclampsia at a tertiary hospital in Tanzania.

Methods

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were held with a purposive sample of 10 women recovering from eclampsia. Thematic analysis informed the interpretation of the data.

Findings

The women had experienced eclamptic seizure as painful and unreal as they were unable to control their body or actions despite sensing what happened. At hospital they felt being cared for

and recovered but concerned because they had not been provided with enough information about the disorder. Being separated from the baby during hospitalisation was troublesome and they worried about infant feeding and health. The women experienced being connected to God and they were grateful for being alive and having recovered. However, they expressed fears over the possible recurrence of eclampsia in future pregnancies and wanted information about prevention strategies.

Conclusion

Experiencing eclampsia is painful and gives a sense of bodily disconnectedness. It involves worrisome separation from the newborn, not being adequately informed and concerns over future health. More holistic care would benefit eclamptic women and their newborns.

Keywords

Eclampsia, Mothers' experiences, Caring, Qualitative interviews, Tanzania