Giving back control: Improving the maternity care experience of survivors of sexual violence

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My body is the evidence
The spoils of his crime.
It is tainted and dirty –
Never to be mine.

I cringe and I shudder,
The memories still hurt,
Of the baby – the child –
The woman of dirt.
Figure 4.1: Percentage of adults aged 16 to 59 who experienced intimate violence since the age of 16, by sex and headline category, year ending March 2015 Crime Survey for England and Wales

Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics
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Risk factors and health during pregnancy among women previously exposed to sexual violence

Lifetime sexual violence and childbirth expectations – A Norwegian population based cohort study
Midwifery 36(2016)14–20
Giving Birth with Rape in One’s Past: A Qualitative Study
BIRTH 40:3 September 2013

“...I was alone against them. All information was given with their hands inside me... I tried to tell myself “relax! Get a grip!” but it was no use.”

When they put in that “vacuum cup” it was the first time I really had thought about the rape in years. I was back in it, being held down and not being able to move.

It got so important to get on my feet again, after the caesarean section. Everything had to be washed away, sweat, blood, filth, bits of tape, and most important, hands. All the hands that had been there, had to go.

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Sexual Violence

Memories of the Sexual Violence

Lying supine, forcibly restrained
Violent approach to the body/genitals
Painfully forced entry and vaginal penetration
Perpetrator takes over control of her body
Struggle, shouting, crying for help
Darkness, blood, semen, sweat, breath
Feels unclothed, despised
Helpless, degraded
Gives up, lets it happen, feels ashamed, leaves her body, disappears

Labour and Birth

Being placed supine, physically restrained
Legs forced apart, placed in stirrups
Invasive procedures, not being listened to or seen
Invasive vaginal examinations
Unfamiliar hands touching body, being overruled
Sight / smell of blood, amniotic fluid, faeces, sweat
Dimmed lighting / being unclothed
Bodily integrity not ensured
Being tied to bed or operating table, giving up
Birth attendants control body, room, time
Increasing understanding of sexual violence

Understand how sexual violence can impact on pregnancy

Build confidence in responding to women’s fears and concerns about pregnancy arising from sexual violence

Consider how we can empower women to make positive choices about their pregnancy
### Feedback from course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the session meet your needs?</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How would you rate the training methods?</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall session rating</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Graphs

- **Did the session meet your needs?**
  - High: 37
  - Low: 23

- **How would you rate the training methods?**
  - High: 48
  - Low: 23

- **Overall session rating**
  - High: 48
  - Low: 23
How able do you feel your organisation is in providing support for survivors of sexual violence?

How confident do you feel in your ability to work with survivors of sexual violence?

How much do you know about the prevalence and impact of sexual violence?

How much do you know about OSARCC’s services?

I understand how to respond appropriately to a disclosure of sexual violence.

I understand how sexual violence might affect women’s experience of maternity care.

I feel confident exploring with women how to manage any fears around their maternity experience and care, which arise from their experiences of sexual violence.

% of participants

- Increase confidence
- No change
- Decreased confidence

Thematic Analysis

- Interactive training

Very interactive, really valued the communication skills I have learned from today.

Fantastic interactive training. Thank you!

Good mix of group/pair/scenario etc.

Great session- very helpful. I hate role play but it was actually very useful & I will put new skills into practice re. calming, questioning, changing language.

Really liked group work, role play, I was never bored and my mind focussed on this session. It did not wander as it does normally at study sessions.

I liked the props, made me think about my environment.
Thematic Analysis

Changes to practice

- Has greatly improved my awareness - lots to reflect on re. my practice.

- I will take this information to heart & will use in future practice.

- Thank you! I thought this was a really important + useful session + not something as doctors we receive any other training on. It will really make me think about how I interact with women in the future.

- I am a midwife and I have been qualified a long time. I was horrified by how much I learnt at this session [that I] had not thought about in my practice but would now.

Next time ...

- More time on ... everything!

- Interview with a survivor

- Legal Aspects

- Network Development
The Future

➤ Training available to everyone

➤ Survivors of sexual violence feel empowered

➤ Thames Valley is know for its care, not its crime
Thank you

Questions