

Between Knowledge and Social Support: Health Information Seeking Using Mobile Phones Among Low-Income New Mothers

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BACKGROUND

- During pregnancy women are bombarded with health information.
 - medical professionals, family, friends, books, and more recently websites and mobile apps
- Research has shown that women rely heavily on these mobile applications before birth.
- Very little is known about how women look for information after birth when most of these applications cease to be of use.

OBJECTIVES

1. Explore early postpartum information needs of low-income mothers
2. Describe their information seeking behaviors
3. Assess their use of mobile technology to fulfill their information needs.

METHODS

- Community engaged explanatory, sequential, quantitative-qualitative design
 - Recommended to identify and access marginal members of a population like low-income households .
- A convenience sample survey (n=77) provided information on needs, sources and technology use, and served as a way to identify low-income mothers (n=33).
- Qualitative in-depth interviews (n=10) reported here to explore experiences of low-income women.

RESULTS

Table 1: Sources of Postpartum Information by Number of Mentions and Education Level (n=10)

Sources Mentioned	Face of face or phone	Midwife	Expert Forum	Parent Forum	Social Media	Mobile App	Type of Concern in Postpartum	Number of Mentions by Education Level Completed		
								College and above	Less than College	Sum
Kelly Mom		✓				✓	breastfeeding remedies, latch, tongue-tie, breastfeeding positions	1	0	1
Leaky Boob		✓			✓		breastfeeding remedies, latch, tongue-tie, breastfeeding positions	1	0	1
Baby Center			✓	✓	✓	✓	breastfeeding remedies, latch, tongue-tie, breastfeeding positions, health of child, is this normal?, mental health mother	3	5	8
The Bump			✓			✓	breastfeeding	1	0	1
Prego & Mommy chat					✓		is this normal?, breastfeeding	1	0	1
Dr. Sears			✓				child's health, tongue tie, vaccines	1	0	1
CDC & NIH			✓				child's health, vaccines, tongue-tie	1	0	1
Health provider	✓	✓					child's health, breastfeeding issues	2	2	4
Friends and family	✓						child's health, behaviors, breastfeeding, infant care	3	3	6
Women, Infants, & Children (WIC)	✓	✓					breastfeeding expectations, breastfeeding problems	0	3	3
Bloomington Area Birth Services (BABS)	✓						breastfeeding expectations, breastfeeding problems, tongue tie	2	2	4
What to Expect	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	breastfeeding expectations	0	2	2
Parents Magazine		✓	✓				infant care	1	0	1
La Leche League	✓	✓	✓				Breastfeeding problems, tongue tie	1	0	1
Lactation consultant	✓	✓					Breastfeeding problems, tongue tie	3	4	7
Midwife, doula	✓	✓					infant care	1	1	2
Facebook Professional Organizations (NYAEC)					✓		infant care	1	0	1
Facebook mom groups (non-specific)					✓		infant care, breastfeeding, tongue-tie	1	3	4
Mom-Blogs (non-specific)			✓				infant care, breastfeeding, tongue-tie	2	1	3
Magazines & books (non-specific)		✓					infant care	1	2	3
Google result pages (non-specific)			✓				breastfeeding, child's health	1	2	3
							All of the above	0	3	3

Salient Postpartum Information Needs

Establishing Breastfeeding: "I had a really hard time breastfeeding. I would cry every time he needed to eat, I was in so much pain. It was a painful and emotional transition... I remember being afraid to call BABS or look for someone to help me breastfeed. I don't know exactly why I felt that way, but I felt more isolated. I do remember talking to my grandma and my aunt about breastfeeding and the pain that I was going through with breastfeeding. My grandma said she didn't breastfeed and my aunt said she breastfed for a few weeks, six weeks or something." (P2)

Infant's health issues: "I had a lot of issues with growth and development, like things would be going one way for a little while and then she wouldn't have an appetite or she would stop sleeping or she would be cranky all the time. So a lot of it was like going online and being like is she sick, what is going on, is she okay?" (P1)

Uncomfortable questions: "Yeah, sex after baby that is definitely a good one. That was uncomfortable, I don't think I ever did ask, because I was uncomfortable asking. I think they just brought it up to me and stuff." (P6)

Knowledge

"It's [La Leche League recommended Leaky Boob on Facebook] an evidence based hub of information for breastfeeding mamas. I try not to start just googling terms randomly. I'd rather have somebody that's research based peer-reviewed. People that actually know what they are talking about." (P10)

"I look for organizations that I know, like NYAEC, early childhood professionals, or Kelley mom or the CDC because I know that they have to have... some sort of filtering" (P6)

Social support

"I googled and would look through the links to find ones for websites that I was comfortable and familiar with, like Babycenter and What to Expect, and then I would find the ones that were expert advice or expert answers. I would look for those first and then I would do like the mom answers, the forum ones where people have said like this is going on or this is what I am experiencing... I would read through those as kind of a way to just feel connected to someone else just to know that I am not crazy..." (P5)

Social support (ctd)

"I punch in sentences and big questions in Google [as a] way of getting different experiences from different moms. Not so much the type of information, but knowing that other moms did this, knowing that it [tongue tie] was very common and not talked about pissed me off, because all these moms are dealing with this stuff. So yeah [I was drawn to] forum or like blogs of moms who have been there, like what they went through, their emotions" (P4)

Accessing information

"I always use my phone. I don't have anything else besides that, so that is what I use. If you do have a question while you are at the doctor's office or something, you can look something up and show it to him." (P6).

Change in patterns of searching

"Short bursts, it was more short bursts. Now when I was pregnant it was long, but after being pregnant, it was like became short bursts." (P3)

"Like little snippets of time, so I would pull up the site or something and I would leave it up so when I had five minutes I could go read a little bit about it, and then if it was like after the kids had gone to bed at the end of the night, then okay now I can pour over this for however long I choose." (P5)

CONCLUSIONS

- Women with lower levels of education tended to search for social support online, communities of peers who provided a sense of community and normalcy. Women with higher education levels looked for authoritative sources of knowledge.

Implications: If we want to reach low-income moms with appropriate information many different venues must be targeted. Institutional sites are not much use for that population.

- Phone used almost exclusively for information seeking online and patterns of searching are short bursts.

Implications: Information must be bite-sized and easily accessible. Important to explore social media app use for this population.

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