

TRAUMATIC CHILDBIRTH: INCIDENCE, RISK FACTORS, AND ITS IMPACT ON MOTHERS AND THEIR INFANTS A SCOPING REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Childbirth is a significant event in women's lives; it is a complex, unique and subjective experience that can easily transform into a traumatic experience, for laboring women. Childbirth was not recognized as a traumatic event until 1994, when Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) guidelines were changed and a traumatic event was redefined. The new definition allowed many researchers, to consider the childbirth as a traumatic event and consequently a number of studies were undertaken.

Objective: The objective of this review was to explore definitions, incidence, and risk factors of traumatic birth, and identify its impact on the health and well-being of women and their infants. This review focused on articles that assessed criterion A.

Methods: A review of full-text articles in English, from 1998 to 2017 indexed in CINHALL, Medline and Science Direct was done. Search terms used in this review were "traumatic childbirth" and "childbirth trauma" or "postnatal psychological trauma".

Results: Traumatic childbirth has been defined inconsistently in the literature. Reviewed studies have shown that, approximately one out of three childbearing women reported their birth experience as traumatic. Ante natal, intrapartum, and postpartum variables were linked with the development of traumatic childbirth. Findings in the literature have emphasized the profound impact of traumatic childbirth on the health of mothers and their infants.

Conclusions: There is still no consensus, on the definition of traumatic childbirth in the literature. Most of the studies included in this review have evaluated traumatic childbirth, according to DSM fourth edition criteria; and no studies have evaluated it, according to the fifth edition. Further research is needed to investigate the impact of traumatic childbirth, on the physical health of the mother. Finally, health care providers should consider not only the physical health, but also the emotional and mental health of the childbearing women, during their routine care.

KEYWORDS: Childbirth, Mental Health, Emotional Health, Psychological Trauma, Traumatic Childbirth