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Abstract for The Nordic Breastfeeding Conference Scientific Program Committee for oral presentation on a new perspectives on the clinical approach of breastfeeding

Titel:

Hand expressing during pregnancy in preparation for breastfeeding for vulnerable pregnant women

Background:

At the Outpatient Clinic for Vulnerable Pregnant Women, we meet women who are experiencing challenges with breastfeeding due to previous sexual abuse.

The women struggle with ambivalence as they want to breastfeed but have negative associations to the breast.

Aims:

By standardized conversations, we aim to:

- Change of mindset on body and breasts to something positive with the potential of strengthen the attachment to their unborn child
- Empower the feeling of ownership and (re)establishment of a positive narrative about their own body (improve self-efficacy)
- Encourage to start breastfeeding
- Reduce social inequality in relation to breastfeeding.

Method:

We have developed a standardized approach for our staff, as these women require an open minded and including dialogue about the abuse, the symbolic meaning of the breast and an understanding of the concrete function of the breast. The intervention includes information about consequences of traumatic experiences and guidance on hand expressing breastmilk late in the pregnancy.

Results:

Women who received the intervention describe a positive change in their view of their own body and breasts. The intervention has had a beneficial effect on building attachment with the child, an increased sense of self-worth and competence and a better relationship with the partner.

Our results have led to a change in the practice for midwives at the clinic for vulnerable pregnant women. Hand express of colostrum in late pregnancy is now recommended, not only for women previously exposed to sexual abuse, but also for women with previously poor breastfeeding experience, poor prenatal attachment, etc.

Conclusion:

With a small change in practice, professionals can empower vulnerable pregnant women to change their views on their own breasts and thus increase the likelihood of successful breastfeeding and a more positive body image.