



CLAHRCBITE

Brokering Innovation Through Evidence

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Provision of a Reflexology service for Women with Anxiety and Complex Pregnancies

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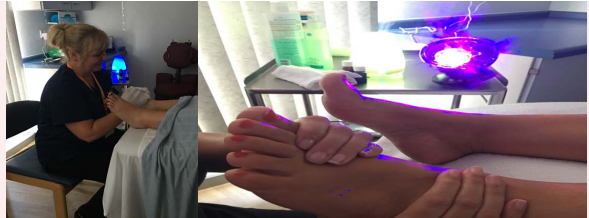
Background

The Safe Active Birth (SAB) Midwife set up a reflexology clinic for women who suffer with pregnancy anxiety, most often associated with a previous traumatic birth experience and a fear of childbirth (tokophobia). This was implemented with the aim to reduce pregnancy and childbirth anxiety by using reflexology from 37wks gestation and then weekly until the birth of baby.

The SAB midwife aimed to address in the health inequality that reflexology at present is only accessible for women with surplus income to pay for the treatment. By providing reflexology within the NHS we are able to offer equality in the provision of choice for women in all socio-economic groups, circumstances including both diverse and affluent. Anxiety affects all socio variables e.g. Gender, age, occupation, disability, ethnicity and place of residence therefore inclusion is acknowledged with the provision of the reflexology service within the NHS.

How did we involve people?

Referrals from the obstetricians and midwives enabled the identification of those anxious women that would most benefit from the service.



What was the aim of the project?

To implement a reflexology service for women referred to the SAB midwife with anxiety and pregnancy complexities To firstly discuss evidence-based birth choices and draw up an individualised SAB birth plan of options for their care in labour.

Aims:

- To reduce the levels of anxiety in the third trimester will benefit the mother and growing baby, preventing growth restriction
- Reducing the production of adrenaline and cortisol that effect both the mother and the growth of the baby in utero
- Reduce the need for pharmaceutical analgesia and epidurals in labour
- Reduce the need for obstetric intervention and instrumental assistance at the birth
- To reduce the incidence of maternal request for caesarean births
- To reduce medical induction of labour
- To reduce post-natal depression & PTSD
- To reduce fear of future births.



What did we do?

Offer the Reflexology on the NHS alongside conventional Maternity care with no cost making it equable to all women with a fear of childbirth

Receive referral's from the midwives and consultants

Review women suitable and perform reflexology

Use Gad 7 score to access starting anxiety and again following the Reflexology treatment

What we found and what does this mean?

Preparation for labour and birth by using reflexology to reduce their anxiety is a prevention approach to maternity care

Confidence and trust in maternity services can be restored and the belief that a better birth experience is achievable

Birth Choices can be truly supported, as empathy with regards the woman's anxiety is respected

The postnatal period is improved, and mothers are able to form bonding and attachment without having to deal with a traumatic experience

Less clinical interventions are used, as choices are safely supported, and anxiety is relieved

What next?

- To continue to raise the public profile nationally of the benefits of using reflexology to relieve childbirth anxiety
- Write training packages for UHMBT maternity services
- Train other trusts in the provision of complementary therapies
- Evaluate the findings of the reflexology service
- Evaluate the cost savings to the NHS
- Evaluate the mother's experiences of their birth and birth stories
- Evaluate the staff experience of supporting women who have received reflexology



University Hospitals 
of Morecambe Bay
NHS Foundation Trust

What is NIHR CLAHRC / ARC North West Coast?

The Applied Research Collaboration North West Coast (ARC NWC) superseded CLAHRC NWC in September 2019. It is a partnership between universities, NHS, public, etc. Its mission is to undertake applied research to improve public health, wellbeing, quality of care & reduce health inequalities across the North West Coast region.
<https://arc-nwc.nihr.ac.uk/>