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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Pregnancy Yoga; Introducing a Free Service for Women in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Background

Women were frequently enquiring about pregnancy exercise classes, however ABUHB was not offering any such classes at the time, and options for this were explored. Yoga has many benefits for both women and the service, therefore steps were taken to establish a free service for women in ABUHB.

'The breathing exercises were really helpful during my birth'



Yoga during pregnancy can reduce stress and anxiety surrounding birth, and also reduce incidences of postnatal depression (Newman et al 2014).

Yoga classes involve breathing and relaxation, often covered in antenatal classes.

Enable women to meet other local pregnant women.

Why Yoga?

The Maternity Network Wales has launched the Safer Pregnancy Initiative through 1000 lives. Women are encouraged to consider lifestyle choices such as exercise.

Free sessions as no venue/equipment hire required.

Yoga can reduce the need for pharmacological analgesia during birth, and also reduce caesarean births. (Newman et al 2014).

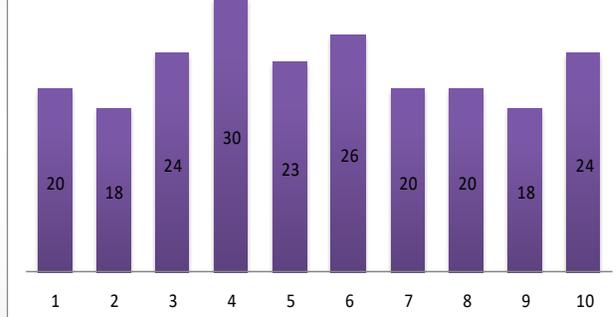
Description

Successful receipt of an Iolanthe award enabled a pregnancy yoga course to be undertaken. Classes commenced the following month in antenatal clinic at the Royal Gwent Hospital. Holding the sessions in the hospital enables them to be free to attend, and running them in the evenings makes them more accessible for women who work. All women receiving maternity care in ABUHB are welcome to attend from 14 weeks gestation. The sessions provide a holistic aspect of maternity care and help to keep women active, as well as preparing them for labour and birth. They also enable women to meet other local pregnant women. Women attending for the first drop-in yoga session and gave overwhelmingly positive feedback. Two classes now run on a Thursday evening, bookable by calling the birth centre. Up to 30 women attend each week and thoroughly enjoy the stretches, breathing and relaxation.

'The community that has been created has been absolutely invaluable to me since having my baby'



Number of women attending yoga each week for first ten weeks



'It is so much more than just a yoga group'



Patient Stories

'I had such a positive labour, and the breathing techniques were a saving grace. I can't even begin to express how grateful I am to have been equipped with such power and knowledge, it has been invaluable.'

'Yoga helped me bring my baby into the world, remain calm and be confident with my labour. The social side of it has helped me have a totally different experience of having a new baby this time around. Having my first was very lonely with very little support. I wish I had had this opportunity when I had my son 6 years ago. I have met some lovely people and life long friends this time.'

Results

The women have set up a Facebook group to keep in touch, share birth stories and support each other. Many women report the breathing exercises to be invaluable during birth. Positive feedback has been shared by women via the ABUHB maternity services Facebook page, and the classes continue to be well attended. The success of the classes has been unprecedented. Women have benefited greatly from being able to apply yoga positions and breathing to labour and birth. Furthermore, they have thoroughly enjoyed the social network that the classes have created, enabling support that extends into the postnatal period. Setting up the classes truly put the women at the heart of the service. The class times and structure have adapted in response to the needs of the women. This was a new venture for ABUHB and it was unknown whether it would work, however the belief that it would improve the service for women and support from the maternity team made the yoga sessions not only a possibility but a success.

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References:

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- 1000 Lives (2017) *Safer Pregnancy*. Available at: <http://www.1000livesplus.wales.nhs.uk/safer-pregnancy>