Making a difference to survivors of childhood sexual abuse in maternity care

Dr Elsa Montgomery – Head of the Department of Midwifery
Dr Yan-Shing Chang – Lecturer, Department of Child & Family Health

Email: elsa.montgomery@kcl.ac.uk

@elsamwm
Aim & objectives

Creation of an educational resource to support and guide midwives, other healthcare professionals and students in caring for survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA)

This presentation will concentrate on findings of focus groups with students as follows:

- Midwifery students – King’s College, London
- Midwifery students – London South Bank University
- Health visiting students - King’s College, London
- Medical Students - King’s College, London

Also what we have learnt talking to survivors themselves
What we know

• 1:5 women have experienced some form of childhood sexual abuse

• We will encounter survivors in our services every day

• Survivors of CSA are a silent, hidden population in healthcare

• Few disclose abuse to health care providers

• ‘Re-enactment’ of abuse is common in maternity care
What do students want to know?

- Informed consent
- Legal issues
- Triggers
- Appropriate language
- ‘Soft markers’
- How should I respond?
- Dealing with meltdowns
- Statistics
What do survivors say?

I think there as well that’s a lack of questioning, you know, it’s going back to this ‘oh we've done our training, we know what you as a survivor want’ and actually they need to just ask.

‘How can we make this easier for you, this is what we’re going to do, what would be better’

...sometimes even someone just asking that question would make me go ‘it’s OK, just carry on’ but, you know, there’s just knowing that they understand. Them telling you that that’s what you need is just taking the control away. You need to ask.
I don’t have control
I start panicking
I try to make
I had tried to
I wanted things a certain way
I wanted to be listened to
I wanted people to pay attention
I felt
I think
I felt so
I, I felt almost like an animal
I had everyone just looking at me
I felt embarrassed
I felt degraded
I felt dirty
I felt horrible! Horrible!
I just wanted to run away
I couldn’t
Evaluation – 2nd year student midwives

Should be seen by all healthcare professionals

Doctors need to see this

Everyday situation

Powerful

Disturbing

Hard-hitting

Effective

Shocking

Insightful

Eye-opening

Thought-provoking

Brilliant

Strong

Enjoying

Difficult

Remarkable

Insisting

Helpful

Understanding

Useful

Countless

Critical

Understanding

Critical
Response to animation

It really puts you in the woman’s shoes, as well, because it’s from that angle. It makes you think, which is something we should always do, really. It makes us think how they would be feeling.

(Health visitor student, KCL)

It’s a big deal, on that video, to have your genitals exposed to a room of people that milling about, you know? It’s not a natural thing, and I think you can so get desensitised to it, just walking about. I think, yes, I hadn’t really thought about that, but that’s awful.

(Medical Student, KCL)

You can see, on someone’s face, if they’re not comfortable with something, and I think we’re just so conditioned to think this is normal, that we don’t even realise that this uncomfortable feeling is something that they don’t have to experience.

(Midwifery student, LSBU)
Elizabeth’s second birth
Challenges with e-learning

...but if it’s another mandatory training requirement on our e-learning for health, I can’t express to you how quickly people click through that stuff. (Medical Student)

I don’t know about everyone else, but a lot of the times through the e-Learning I end up just clicking. (Health Visitor student)
To conclude

• Survivors of CSA are in our care everyday

• Few of us are confident in caring for them

• Pregnancy and birth can be very traumatising for these women

• Our resource will equip professionals with strategies for provision of compassionate care

• A resource for the classroom

• An online resource for professional development
Acknowledgements

We extremely grateful to:

- The Survivors Trust
- The survivors who were prepared to talk to us
- Students to participated in focus groups
- King’s Cultural Institute & JMotion
- The Burdett Trust for Nursing

References