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The impact of the transition to parenthood in health and well-being

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Background

Even though it is common, normative, predictable and usually desired, parenthood is one of the most dramatic developmental transitions in the family life cycle, likely to cause imbalance and vulnerability. Objective: This study aimed to explore the influences on the health and well-being of parents during the first 6 months of transition to the exercise of the parental role.

Methods

Grounded Theory. Data collection from semi-structured interviews (total of 60 interviews). Use of constant comparative method and theoretical sampling in the process of data collection and data analysis, undertaken in a simultaneous and recursive manner. Participation of five fathers and five mothers (couples).

Results

They describe the category of living on the edge of one's capacities, which is composed by the subcategories of feeling exhaustion and weariness, perceiving exhaustion and weariness in the wife, releasing emotions and feeling less exhaustion and weariness, that explain the consequences of the discovery of the impact that the birth of the child has on the parents' lives, and upon realizing all the tasks and responsibilities of parenthood.

Conclusions

The adaptation to parenthood is not easy, linear and fast. It involves numerous situations that generate stress and emotional disturbance, tied to tiredness, sleep disturbance, work overload and readjustments of the dynamics of life, which affect the mother especially. The antenatal and postnatal preparation for this impact should, therefore, be encouraged and effective, as a focus of nursing intervention.
