

# CULTURE AND MATERNITY CARE IN KAZAKHSTAN: WHAT NEW MOTHERS EXPECTED

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## INTRODUCTION

Maternity care in Kazakhstan has been characterized as low in quality with low levels of public health knowledge. Previous research indicates childbirth preparation courses improve knowledge and encourage participation and decision making of mothers.<sup>1</sup> Such courses, are rare in Kazakhstan. This study examined the benefits of childbirth preparation courses as well as the needs and expectations regarding childbirth care through the perspectives of new mothers.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The qualitative method of focus groups was chosen for this study in order to examine how people use and interpret meanings and messages in particular contexts. The criteria for participation included women who have given birth within the previous 12 months in Astana and had attended childbirth courses provided by the non-governmental organization SABI Astana.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two themes emerged from the focus groups: fear and trust. Information from childbirth courses made participants feel confident, but not necessarily participate in decisions. The presence and support of a companion helped participants overcome fear, contrasting the negative experience of being alone. Trust in the maternity care was established through communication style—the ability to explain and instruct; however, distrust was strongly reported.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These participants emphasized the importance of the relational aspects of care more than individual control and participation. Therefore, the health care system should consider improving doctor-patient communication and establishing repeated visits with the same primary doctor during pregnancy. By supporting organizations that provide childbirth courses, improvements for expecting mothers in knowledge and preparation can be made. For those offering childbirth courses, issues of trust with providers should be emphasized along with the importance of having a birthing companion to attend labor and delivery as well as the childbirth courses.

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## REFERENCES.

1. Carlsson I., Ziegert, K., Sahlberg-Blom E., Nissen E. (2010). Maintaining power: Women's experiences from labour onset before admittance to maternity ward. *Midwifery*, 28: 86-92.