

Judith Parsons – FEND 2021

Summary

Supporting women with GDM: what's important in the long term?

Women with gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes and experiencing further incidences of gestational diabetes in the future. Research also suggests they have a higher chance of experiencing ante- and post-natal depression. Type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented through lifestyle intervention. However, there is a lack of preventative interventions for this population and women with GDM are often not systematically followed up after birth. We conducted qualitative research to explore women's experiences of GDM, factors that influenced their health behaviour and their views on lifestyle interventions. This led to the development and feasibility trial of a motivational interviewing-based intervention with peer support to help delay or prevent future diabetes. Our qualitative findings revealed that many women had a strong emotional response to GDM that persisted after birth.

The feasibility trial indicated that the intervention might support weight loss in this group. Postpartum weight loss was associated with a reduction in depression. Trial participants reported that the intervention had positively impacted emotional wellbeing, understanding relationships with food, eating behaviour and feelings of stigma and isolation. Possible mechanisms of action are providing personalised and supportive care, continuity of care, testing, reminders and facilitating shared experiences with peers. Key implications for health professionals are: 1) understanding the potential emotional impact of GDM, 2) supportive and effective communication that promotes autonomy, and 3) implementing systematic and meaningful follow up after birth.

Biography

Judith Parsons is a Research Associate at the Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Palliative Care at King's College London. She has worked in varied public health roles for the UK National Health Service, as a Health Research Officer for The Commonwealth Secretariat and a Health Advisor for a charity in Kampala, Uganda. She has an MA in Health Promotion, Education and International Development and an MSc in Clinical and Public Health Nutrition from University College London. She was awarded a Doctoral Fellowship from the National Institute of Health Research to develop an intervention to prevent type 2 diabetes after GDM.