Perceptions and experiences of physical and mental health related pregnancy issues related pregnancy in Japanese postpartum women.

Asuka Sakamoto

Seirei Christopher University

**key words** women’s health • qualitative research • health issue

**Purpose** Pregnancy is the most irreplaceable event of a woman’s life. However, pregnancy and labor may profoundly affect women’s health. This study explored Japanese postnatal women’s perceptions and experiences of physical and mental health issues and explored preventive strategies.

**Methods** Phenomenological qualitative research involving in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 mother within 20 months after childbirth.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Seirei Christphor university ethical approval accepted this study.

**Results** Four main themes were observed in postpartum women’s experiences and their perception of health after delivery. The main themes included: 1) experiences of the types of impairment and disability; 2) postnatal women’s state of mind; 3) perceptions of what causes physical and mental health issues; and, 4) how to prevent those issues. The women experienced physical and mental health changes throughout their pregnancies and in child birth. They perceived that their relationships with family and friends were significantly associated with keeping their health.

**Discussion** Pregnancy and labor influenced the women’s physical and mental health both positively and negatively. In-depth interviews showed that most women in this study experienced lumber and pelvic girdle pain, pelvic floor muscle dysfunction, and general fatigue. However, the women were not treated for their health problems in an appropriate way. The women’s lack of knowledge and perceptions of physical and mental health was apparent. Furthermore, treatment and conditioning of their bodies after child birth were not well known, and they did not know where to get the information, or where they should go for treatment. Relevant information regarding women’s health related to pregnancy and appropriate clinical places to get relevant treatment should be developed in Japan.

These findings will also clarify the need for appropriate strategies to care for the women focused on improving their quality of life.