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Research

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Evaluation of satisfaction with care in a midwifery unit and an obstetric unit: a randomized controlled trial of low-risk women

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Abstract

Background

Satisfaction with birth care is part of quality assessment of care. The aim of this study was to investigate possible differences in satisfaction with intrapartum care among low-risk women, randomized to a midwifery unit or to an obstetric unit within the same hospital.

Methods

Randomized controlled trial conducted at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Østfold Hospital Trust, Norway. A total of 485 women with no expressed preference for level of birth care, assessed to be at low-risk at onset of spontaneous labor were included. To assess the overall satisfaction with intrapartum care, the Labour and Delivery Satisfaction Index (LADSI) questionnaire, was sent to the participants six months after birth. To assess women's experience with intrapartum transfer, four additional items were added. In addition, we tested the effects of the following aspects on satisfaction; obstetrician involved, intrapartum transfer from the midwifery unit to the obstetric unit during labor, mode of delivery and epidural analgesia.

Results

Women randomized to the midwifery unit were significantly more satisfied with intrapartum care than those randomized to the obstetric unit (183 versus 176 of maximum 204 scoring points, mean difference 7.2, $p = 0.002$). No difference was found between the units for women who had an obstetrician involved during labor or delivery and who answered four additional questions on this aspect (mean item score 4.0 at the midwifery unit vs 4.3 at the obstetric unit, $p = 0.3$). Intrapartum transfer from the midwifery unit to an obstetric unit, operative delivery and epidurals influenced the level of overall satisfaction in a negative direction regardless of allocated unit ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion

Low-risk women with no expressed preference for level of birth care were more satisfied if allocated to

the midwifery unit compared to the obstetric unit.