

Perinatal perineal health program

an institutional interdisciplinary project

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Background

Between **25% and 53% of women worldwide experience pelvic floor disorders (PFD)** after childbirth, which can have devastating consequences on their quality of life(1,2).

Additionally, 60% of adult women experience some degree of urinary incontinence, and **20% of women will require surgery during their lifetime**(1).

PFD can restrict women in their daily activities, have a negative impact on their quality of life, and result in high societal costs(2).

Therefore, **it is necessary to develop prevention strategies for PFD** related to pregnancy and delivery(2,3).

Pelvic floor muscle training during pregnancy is a fundamental therapy in preventing complications (3,4).

The RHNe Neuchatel had qualified professionals, but there was no coordination between the services.

Methods

The interdisciplinary project was implemented using a **methodical, collaborative, and patient-centred approach**. Seven inter-professional meetings were held with physiotherapists, clinical midwives, and their respective managers to encourage the sharing of expertise, perspectives, and knowledge in the field of perineal health. The project aimed to improve patient care by utilizing **the complementary skills of healthcare professionals**.

The involvement of the obstetrician-gynaecologist head of department was crucial in the planning and development of the project, which also enhanced its legitimacy and credibility both within and outside the institution.

In addition to inter-professional meetings, the institution's communications department and project group developed **information and communication tools for patients**. These tools aim to provide clear, accurate, and accessible information on various aspects of primary healthcare. (see QR code for the communication tools



Link to the Instagram Video



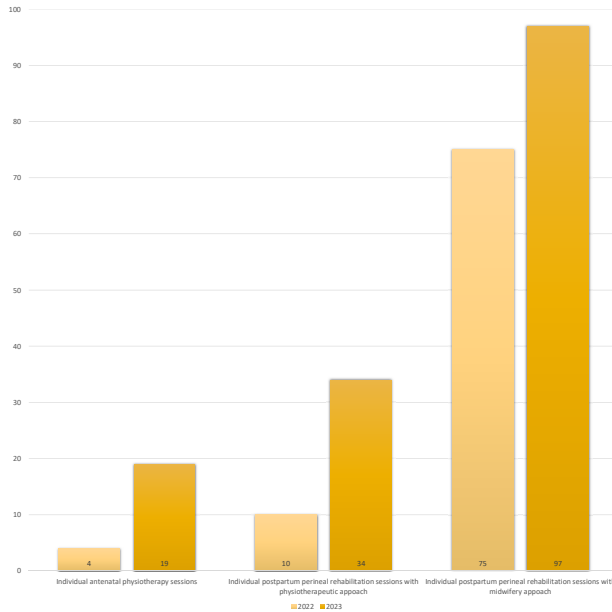
Link to the website article

Finally, **statistical data monitoring** has been implemented to evaluate the project's effectiveness

Aims

The aims of this interdisciplinary project are:

- Pooling skills, **aiming for efficiency**
- To introduce **primary prevention**
- Create an **interdisciplinary clinical itinerary**



Interventions and Results

Several initiatives have been developed after interdisciplinary project meetings:

- At the maternity unit, women are given a **leaflet about antenatal physiotherapy sessions** when they open their file. During this time, they are also asked **specific questions about perineal health**.



Link to the antenatal leaflet

- **Individual antenatal physiotherapy sessions:** These sessions include a perineal assessment, exercises for the lower back, pelvis, and perineum, breathing exercises, perineal massage, and biofeedback to help understand how to push and relax the pelvic floor simultaneously. Regular sessions are recommended up until the birth, particularly in cases of urinary incontinence or back/pelvic pain.

- **Group information sessions:** During the postpartum stay in the maternity unit, patients can go to one of the groups run by a physiotherapist and a midwife, twice a week for 30 to 45 minutes. Additionally, a **leaflet on perineal postpartum care** is given.



Link to the postpartum leaflet

- **Individual postpartum perineal rehabilitation sessions** are offered 5 to 6 weeks after birth with a midwife or physiotherapist. There are two complementary approaches:
 - **midwifery approach** involves manual and abdominal re-education.
 - **physiotherapeutic approach** involves biofeedback and electrostimulation, abdominal rehabilitation, and gradual progression to functional training, such as running, lifting, and jumping.

Since the project was set up in January 2023, prenatal sessions, post-partum sessions with physiotherapists and sessions with midwives have **increased by a factor of 4.8, 3.4 and 1.3** respectively (see graph below alongside).

160 women were able to take part in postpartum group information sessions, i.e. **13.8%** of women who had access to the RHNe.

Discussion

The RHNe perineal health project started in January 2023 and has facilitated the efficient use of interdisciplinary resources.

The project's strengths include **enhanced collaboration between midwives and physiotherapists** and a significant **increase in the number of women who are informed about perineal care during pregnancy**.

Additionally, the project has reinforced the improvements already made in the perineal care of pregnant women. These improvements include reviewing obstetric practices during labour and delivery, reducing the use of episiotomy to 6.3% by 2023 and introducing hot water compresses for delivery.

An increase in the number of sessions and patient adherence to this therapy were observed, indicating the project's effectiveness.

However, weaknesses still exist, particularly during the prenatal period, **as not all women are not offered preventive appointments**. In immediate postnatal care, **reaching all women can be challenging** due to the short length of stay (usually 3 to 4 days) and numerous interventions. Although the project is interdisciplinary, its impact is primarily institutional, which limits its reach. Furthermore, **long-term evaluations by patients are necessary to measure the project's impact**, and this is currently under development.

References

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