

Abstract

Background: The U.S. has some of the highest global rates of maternal mortality and morbidity, which can be attributed to inadequate prenatal care utilization (CDC, 2019; Slomski, 2019). Sufficient maternal health literacy, which is an important component of prenatal care, and feelings of empowerment have been shown to improve health outcomes for mothers and children (APA, 2019; Guttersrud et al., 2015; Office on Women’s Health, 2019; WHO, 2020;). Health passports are booklets that people can use to manage their healthcare and learn about relevant topics. The purpose of this project was to adapt and implement a validated Maternal and Child Health (MCH) passport to increase MCH literacy and self-confidence among Baltimore City mothers receiving doula care.

Methods: This project utilized a pre- and post-test design and took place at a nationally renowned medical institution in Baltimore, Maryland. Although five field experts were able to critically evaluate the MCH passport prior to project implementation, the data for doulas and mothers is from a learning data set that reflects regional demographics. Ten fictional doulas completed virtual training and then reviewed the MCH passport with 50 fictional consenting mothers for four weeks to determine if the passport changed baseline maternal health literacy and self-confidence scores.

Results: The MCH passport received an average suitability score of 14.8 (SD: 2.39) out of 18 from five field experts. Doulas received an average knowledge checklist score of 10.9 (SD: 0.57) out of 13. The mothers’ maternal health literacy scores improved by 12.82 points (SD: 3.26) and their self-confidence by 1.38 points (SD: 4.49), both of which are statistically significant.

Conclusion: This pilot study demonstrated that the MCH passport is effective for improving maternal health literacy and self-confidence among pregnant women in a learning data set that is reflective of the targeted population. More research is needed regarding the use of health passports.

Implications: The MCH passport can be offered in various clinical settings (e.g., community health clinic, women's health office, hospital, etc.) to combat the negative health trends seen in U.S. mothers.

Keywords: maternal health, health passport, maternal health literacy, maternal mortality, doula

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