Exploring Black Women’s Experience of Hysterectomy

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1 SUMMARY

The study explores the hysterectomy experience of Black women living in HRM.

Seven Black women who've had hysterectomies for non-life threatening reasons* were interviewed.

Eight major categories emerged from the data; this presentation focusses on support and information in policy and practise

*includes fibroids, severe pain & dysfunctional bleeding
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**Rationale:** Black women need to understand what it means to have a hysterectomy & its impact on life afterwards.

- **Purpose:** To explore the experiences of Black women in Halifax Region, NS who have undergone hysterectomies for non-life threatening conditions.

- **Research question:** What are the hysterectomy experiences of Black women living in Halifax, NS?
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Research objectives
To understand the hysterectomy experience for Black women living in Halifax, NS, in relation to:

(1) Meaning of hysterectomy
(2) Decision-making process
(3) Expectations about care & treatment
(4) Expectations about recovery
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LIT REVIEW - Hysterectomies in Canada

- More than 80% of hysterectomies are performed for non-life threatening reasons
- There are wide variations in rates across Canada and within provinces for non-life threatening hysterectomies
- Hysterectomy rates in Atlantic Canada are among the highest in the country

*Black women (and all women) need more comprehensive information on this frequent surgery*
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Literature Review- **Black women’s health in NS**

- Black women’s health studies show similar systemic barriers to accessing health services
- Studies on menopause and depression have shown similar findings to Black women's experience in the US.
- Similarities include the importance of family, community and spirituality in maintaining good health
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LIT REVIEW- other jurisdictions

Research documents aspects of the following as associated with the hysterectomy experience:

1) decision-making process,
2) information needs,
3) alternatives to hysterectomy,
4) influence of cultural beliefs and perceptions,

*These are all areas in which more information may be required*
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STUDY DESIGN & METHODS

Theoretical perspective: Black feminist

Methodological Approach: Interpretive phenomenology

Data Collection & Analysis
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Black Feminist Perspective

Recognizes that Black women’s experiences of oppression - both gender-based and racially-motivated, may result in distinct needs.

These needs are different from those of: (1) non-Black but non-dominant ethnocultural women, (2) Caucasian women and (3) Black men...

(Guy-Sheftall, 1990; Barbee, 1994; Collins, 2000).
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*Interpretive Phenomenology*

Approach leads to *understanding* rather than describing the phenomenon (Mackey, 2005).

The relationship between study participants' life context(s) and their narratives is included in the processes of data collection and analysis (Lopez & Willis, 2004).
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Data Collection & Analysis

- Semi-structured interviews with 7 Black women in HRM who had a hysterectomy for non-life threatening reasons.
- Reflexive note taking (the researcher)
- Thematic analysis to illuminate
  - Unique experiences and similar experiences
  - Support Needs (Information and Other)
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Key Themes and Findings

- Meaning
- Supplementary observations
- Advice (health care providers)
- Advice (women)
- Decision-making
- Care and Treatment
- Recovery
- Support
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Discussion and Implications

- Provide insights into Black women’s experience through their narratives,
- Empower Black women by giving voice to their experiences and perhaps most importantly,
- Address the need to contextualize socio-cultural differences in lived experience among women in health service provision
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Finding Implications for Health Care Provision

- **Support**
  - Family, Friends, Health Care Provider, Workmates, Work (Managers), Spiritual

- **Information as Support**
  - Type, Format and Stages at which it is provided

- **Mental health**
  - Encourage women to seek support during recovery
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Policy and Service Provision Recommendations

New knowledge from the study will be shared with identified target audiences including:

- Health Association of African Canadians
- Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health
- Capital District Health Authority
- IWK Health Centre (through diversity committee)
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Recommendations for Further Research

- Research on hysterectomy experiences of Black women of other national origin, and women of other ethnocultural groups
- Research on the longer term outcomes of the hysterectomy experience
- Research on the role of male partners (and perceptions of men in the community) in the decision-making process
- Research on whether or not non-clinical factors influence health professionals’ advice to women regarding hysterectomy
Conclusion

This study sought to explore the hysterectomy experiences of Black women (meaning & expectations about care, treatment and recovery).

The hysterectomy experience is more complex (and long term) than the literature and the clinical model would suggest.

And includes: spirituality, symptom severity, emotional recovery and employment security
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