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Pregnancy, delivery and post-partum experiences: similarities and differences in Portuguese mothers: from a TransCultural Study of PostNatal Depression (TCS-PND)

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We aim to address the main similarities and differences in pregnancy, delivery and postnatal experiences of Portuguese mothers. In order to accomplish this purpose, 8 focus groups were composed, each one with 4 to 6 participants. The sample, with a total of 35 subjects, is quite heterogeneous regarding several social and demographic characteristics. However, the majority of the mothers had their first (45.7%) or the second child (45.7%), about six months prior to the study.

The focus groups were held in Medical Centres and the mothers were invited to participate by the nurses responsible for the vaccination in those centres. Most mothers agreed to participate. Those sessions occurred in the presence of two researchers and were audio-taped. Some questions were presented for discussion in the group, in order to focus the participants in their pregnancy and postnatal experiences. Mothers contributions were then transcribed and categorised using the IN-VIVO program. The categorisation of themes resulting from mothers participation, as well as some examples of their contributions, which had been categorised in each one of the themes, are presented. Similarities and differences found in pregnancy, delivery and postnatal experiences in this Portuguese sample, along with the advantages of using a qualitative methodology when conducting a study with this kind of purpose, are discussed. In relation to observations in others countries, results show the great importance of the quality of the relationship and support from extended family and husband to the happiness of Portuguese women during pregnancy and postpartum; nevertheless the mothers complain of the intrusiveness of the family after delivery. Also, as far as postnatal depression is concerned, and regarding to the causes, almost all the mothers conveyed that overwork and lack of support from husband and from mother might lead to depression after delivery.