

Hypnobirthing story – Wairarapa DHB takes the lead

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Reporter

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1) Why did the DHB pick this programme up?

Wairarapa District Health Board's Hypnobirthing Practitioner, Carole Wheeler, also calls the course "Preparation for birth without fear."

The five week ante-natal course follows the Mongan method, and covers anatomy and physiology, relaxation and breathing for labour and birthing. It explains the companions role, teaches light touch massage, deepening exercises and much, much more.

Wairarapa DHB was the first DHB in New Zealand to offer this programme, which is designed to prepare women for a positive birth experience and reduce Caesarean rates, and is the only DHB to offer it free of charge (it would normally be approx. \$425 per couple).

2) Has the Wairarapa DHB expanded the hypnobirthing programme since 2016? How? Is it now available to other women such as first time mothers?

The programme was first offered to birth couples that had previously had a traumatic birth or C-Section. It is now being extended wherever possible to all mothers. We have also increased the classes being offered. A total of 56 couples April 2017 to March 2018 did the course, and already 27 have undertaken classes this year in the three months since April.

3) Are more women using the programme? - Why/why not?

Yes, it is becoming mainstream here at Wairarapa DHB. The classes are held at the hospital on Monday or Wednesday evenings 7pm to 9.30pm. Expecting mothers participate with their birth companion, usually this is her partner but sometimes will be her mother, or a friend. Classes are very relaxed, with usually about 7 partner pairs. Each course consists of 5 weeks of classes plus the pair makes a commitment to practise at home for a few minutes every day.

4) Why did the DHB want to lower the number of caeserian births?

A few years ago, the National Clinical indicators showed that Wairarapa DHB had the highest Caesarian Section rate in New Zealand, at 28% of births. The maternity team was actively engaged in ways to reduce this, and introducing Hypnobirthing classes was recognised as an opportunity to increase VBAC (vaginal birth after Caesarean) rates. Learning how to approach birth without fear,

particularly after a previous, often traumatic or emergency birth, empowers the mother to confidently prepare and work with the body's natural instinctive birth process.

Has the Programme been successful?

Yes. Wairarapa DHB's CS rate has decreased to just 17%.

The Hypnobirthing Practitioner has plans to undertake instructor training with the intent to develop a wider skill base and be able to offer more birth preparation services; including the 'Spinning Babies Parent Class'. This class would prepare women physically for birth. It teaches stretches and techniques to balance the pelvic area and help guide the baby to a more optimal position to assist mother and baby during labour and birthing.

5) Have other DHBs picked up similar programmes since Wairarapa?

There are hypnobirthing practitioners trained and available nationally and most DHBs would be able to refer women to one locally, however WrDHB has fully integrated hypnobirthing into everyday practice and support the local community by providing the classes free of charge.

Privately funded classes are offered elsewhere, but we are not aware of any other DHB that is funding Hypnobirthing courses.