Pelvic Floor Exercises & Pelvic Physical Therapy Directory for Pregnant & Postpartum Individuals

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Pelvic Floor Exercises & Pelvic Physical Therapy Directory for Pregnant & Postpartum Individuals

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Problem Identification

- During my time at Colchester FM, I learned about the importance of pelvic floor exercise for preventing urinary incontinence.
- Speaking with pregnant and postpartum patients I also learned a few of them had urinary incontinence.
  - However, the time commitment and fatigue associated with having a newborn at home was a barrier to seeking help controlling their symptoms.
- Therefore, the goal of this project was to create a pelvic floor exercise resource and local pelvic physical therapy directory that could easily be shared with both pregnant and postpartum patients who might benefit from the information.
- The AHEC Focus Area of the project is Interprofessional Education.
Cost and Considerations

• 1/7 women have surgery for pelvic organ prolapse or urinary incontinence in their lifetime
  • The direct cost for treatment exceeds $1 billion per year in the US
  • Pregnancy and childbirth are major risk factors for pelvic floor disorders
• Multiple studies have shown that pelvic floor exercises performed during pregnancy significantly lowers the risk of urinary incontinence more than 6 months after childbirth
• Kegel exercises are a popular group of pelvic floor exercises that can be implemented at home and have been shown to reduce urinary incontinence
Community Perspective and Support for Project

“...[Chronic pelvic pain and urinary incontinence issues are] not something women should just expect to have and live with because they have carried and delivered babies.” - Stephanie Douglas, PT

Do you believe giving pregnant & postpartum patients (or postpartum individuals at their child’s 1st well visit) an exercise packet consisting of a few exercises to complete at home as well as a list of local pelvic health physical therapists would be a valuable resource?

“...Yes, this would be a good start and if the patient is having trouble with the exercises or issues that are not resolved with a simple progression of post-partum exercises, contact with a PT clinic would be advised.” - Stephanie Douglas, PT
Intervention and Methodology

• An EPIC dotphrase was created that could easily be added to After Visit Summaries or Communications to patients
• The EPIC dotphrase contains:
  • Written instructions on how to perform Kegel exercises at home
  • A list of local pelvic physical therapy locations, collected from a Google search of “pelvic physical therapy near Colchester, VT”
  • A link to a website containing a national database of certified pelvic physical therapists to assist patients with finding a provider at location that is most convenient for them.
• To access the dotphrase, open the smartphrase manager then search for user “Breseman, Matthew”
• The dotphrase is titled “PELVICFLOOREXERCISESANDPTLOCATIONS”
Contents of the Dotphrase

KEGEL INSTRUCTIONS
General Recommendations When Performing Kegels from Yount SM et al.¹
- If BMI >30 advise person to lose weight.
- Locate the right muscles:
  - (1) Pretend you are trying to avoid passing gas
  - (2) Pretend to tighten your vagina around a tampon or penis
  - (3) You should feel Kegels more toward the back of the pelvic area.
  - (4) Imagine you are sitting on a marble and tighten your pelvic muscles as if you are lifting the marble.
- Another method is to stop urinating midstream (not first of day) identify the muscles used-use only to identify muscles.
- To evaluate strength: stop urination and feel if these are the same muscles used during Kegels or practice during sexual intercourse with partner feedback.
- Quality is better than quantity; increase gradually to recommendations.
- Try to do at the same time you do something else everyday to remember to do them daily.
- Start learning lying on back to engage only posterior pelvic muscles. Progress to perform sitting or standing.
- Try to start with empty bladder.
- Do not engage abdominal, thighs or buttocks muscles.
- Do not hold your breath.

References:
The project received positive verbal feedback from providers at the Colchester Family Medicine practice.

At the time I finished my rotation, the dotphrase had been shared with one patient.
Evaluation of Effectiveness and Limitations

- An evaluation of this project would potentially include information tracking how often the template is shared with patients.
- Another way to evaluate the project would be by asking patients for subjective feedback about the information provided at their next office visit.
- Qualitative data could be acquired by asking patients to complete a standardized questionnaire that evaluates various metrics regarding the effectiveness of the project.
Recommendation for Future Interventions/Projects

- Future interventions/projects could aim to expand upon the written instruction provided by identifying links to quality videos demonstrating pelvic floor exercises.
- Future interventions/projects could also construct a survey for Colchester Family Medicine patients to complete to evaluate the effectiveness of the project.
References

