

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PROJECT

“OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE. THE NEW GOAL FOR RESEARCH, POLICIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS ON CHILDBIRTH

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OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE
RESEARCH & POLICIES

by Patrizia Quattrocchi

OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE

“The appropriation of women’s body and reproductive process by health personnel, which is expressed by a dehumanising treatment, an abuse of medicalisation and pathologisation of natural processes, resulting in a loss of autonomy and ability to decide freely about their body and sexuality, negatively impacting their quality of life.”

Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life free of Violence”
Article 15, Venezuela 2007

Summary

Over the last century, pregnancy and childbirth have become increasingly **medicalised** in most parts of the world. The process of childbirth is often conceived of and treated as a medical event, requiring control, risk management and constant monitoring of the woman’s body. In many countries, childbirth still includes a variety of **routine medical interventions**, such as labour-inducing drugs, the lithotomic position, epidurals, manoeuvres, episiotomies and an excess of surgical deliveries. These interventions are also used in women with low-risk pregnancies, despite WHO recommendations and the findings of evidence-based medicine on the topic.

Sometimes women can be **coerced** into accepting medical interventions or these interventions are performed **without their consent**. In some cases, this coercion can be psychological or not explicit, i.e., related to the **authoritativeness** of biomedical knowledge and power issues in the doctor-patient relationship. It represents at times a subtle form of limiting a woman’s fundamental right to **participate** actively in the process of pregnancy and childbirth and to decide in a free and conscious manner in consideration of the woman’s own body.

In Latin America, over the past decade, the term “**obstetric violence**” (OV) has become part of the legal framework. The concept refers to acts in the context of labour and birth categorised as physically or psychologically violent due to **unjustified** use of medical interventions. Specific laws against obstetric violence – a type of **gender-based violence** and **violation of human rights** – exist in Venezuela, Argentina and Mexico.

In Europe, the issue is raised by human rights organisations and social movements fighting for more humane and respectful births. In Spain, Italy and France, observatories on OV were implemented, but no country has passed legislation on the matter yet. The concept is far from receiving sufficient critical examination within biomedical practice and public policy, and it is not seen as a potential tool for rethinking and improving birth care policies and practices.

General Objective

The project objective is transferring Latin American experiences on recognising and preventing OV to the European context in order to provide decision makers with an innovative theoretical and methodological tool for rethinking the quality of birth care services and providing society with new ways to discuss childbirth issues.

Specific Objectives

1) Analysing the historical, social and political processes that led to the legal recognition of OV in some Latin American countries, focusing on Argentina.

VISIT

THE PROJECT WEBSITE!

<https://www.obstetricviolence-project.com>



Patrizia Quattrocchi at a Workshop in



Mendoza, Argentina, 15 June 2017

2) Analysing the **impact** that this recognition has had on birth care services (according to official data) and on the training of the next generation of health providers (fieldwork).

3) Identifying and **transferring** good practice and tools from the Argentinian and Latin American experience and supporting a process of social and political recognition of OV in the European context, especially in countries where medical intervention in child labour and childbirth is common, as in Italy and Spain.

4) Designing and implementing a **platform** on OV, as an innovative point of reference on the matter for decision makers, researchers and training managers in health issues.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 700946. The first year of research takes place in Argentina (Universidad Nacional de Lanús, Instituto de Salud Colectiva, 2016-2017); the second in Italy (Università degli Studi di Udine, Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature, Comunicazione, Formazione e Società, 2017-2018)

ACTIVITIES (March 2017 - September 2018)

- Interviewing key persons and health program managers.
- Processing and analysing data.
- Visiting Buenos Aires city and Province public hospitals.
- Administration of a questionnaire to obstetrics-gynaecology and midwifery residents, students and health personnel based in public hospitals.
- Participating in conferences (as a speaker/lecturer) and special events and conducting seminars and workshops.
- Participating in training activities.
- Disseminating information from the project in public events/social media.
- Designing the project website <https://www.obstetricviolence-project.com>
- Fieldwork in Buenos Aires.

FOCUS ON SOME ACTIVITIES

- Mendoza, Argentina. Patrizia Quattrocchi at "Tercer Jornadas de Sociología de la Universidad Nacional de Cuyo y Pre-ALAS 2017", 15-16 June 2017.
 - **Lecture** entitled “*Violencia Obstétrica. Aportes desde America Latina*”. The lecture examined preliminary results on fieldwork carried out in Buenos Aires. This was part of the panel discussing “*Género, Sexualidad y Políticas Públicas*”.
 - Attended the **Conference workshop** “*La intervención en lo social como praxis coproductiva*”

- **18 May. Buenos Aires. Cine Gourmount.**

- Participating in the premiere of “Parir”, the documentary on obstetric violence directed by Florencia Mujica/Las Casildas.



The documentary “Parir” was shown in the *Cinema Gourmount* in Buenos Aires for a month. It was shown for general audiences. Each projection was followed by an interesting debate between the public and experts, civil organizations and health professionals.

In the photo: The founder of Las Casildas during the premiere, Buenos Aires, 18 May 2017.

- **Visiting 6 public hospitals in Buenos Aires City and Buenos Aires Province. June-August 2017**



Patrizia Quattrocchi administered a **questionnaire** to obstetrics and gynecology residents and midwifery residents on their definition around the topics of obstetric violence and humanized childbirth. The survey was carried out in the following hospitals: *Hospital General de Agudos “Evita”* (Lanús); *Hospital General de Agudos “Dr. J. Fernández”* (Buenos Aires), *Hospital General de Agudos “Dr. P. Piñero”* (Buenos Aires), *Hospital General de Agudos “Dr. T. Álvarez”* (Buenos Aires), *Hospital Nacional “Prof. A. Posadas”* (Buenos Aires Provincia), *Hospital “Maternidad Estela De Carlotto”* (Moreno).

In the photo: the researcher at the *Hospital Nacional “Posadas”*, 18 August 2017

- **8 August. Universidad Nacional de Lanús. Project dissemination.**

Patrizia Quattrocchi at the *Instituto de Salud Colectiva*. Dissemination lecture entitled: “*Violencia Obstétrica. Los nuevos objetivos para la investigación, la política y los derechos humanos relacionados con el parto y el nacimiento. Avances de Investigación.*”



- **17 August. Buenos Aires Ministry of Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism.**

Patrizia Quattrocchi was invited at the *Dirección Nacional de Políticas Contra la Violencia Institucional de la Secretaria de Derechos Humanos y Pluralismo Cultural de la Nación* to discuss obstetric violence topic from a human rights perspective.

- **25 July.** Patrizia Quattrocchi was invited by *OVO-Italia Osservatorio Violenza Ostetrica* (Italian Observatory on Obstetric Violence) to write a **paper** on the political debate to promote physiological childbirth in Italy. ("Sicurezza, diritti riproduttivi e saperi autorevoli nel parto e nella nascita in Italia", [https://ovoitalia.wordpress.com/2017/07/25/una-riflessione-antropologica-sul-dibattito-parlamentare-sulla-nascita/Patrizia Quattrocchi](https://ovoitalia.wordpress.com/2017/07/25/una-riflessione-antropologica-sul-dibattito-parlamentare-sulla-nascita/Patrizia%20Quattrocchi)).
- **4-8 September in Valencia, Spain. Project dissemination**
A Poster on OBSTETRICVIOLENCE Project was presented by the researcher at "XIV Congreso de Antropología *“Antropología en Transformación: sentidos, compromisos y utopías.”*" It was part of the panel discussing "Perspectivas contemporáneas sobre derechos humanos: usos y procesos de recreación en contextos locales."



- **20 September 2017. Rome, Italy. Fieldwork and Project dissemination**
Patrizia Quattrocchi attended at the Press Conference "*Le donne e il Parto. Prima Indagine nazionale Doxa sulla violenza ostetrica in Italia*", organized by OVO- Observatory of Obstetric Violence. OBSTETRICVIOLENCE Project was presented at the Seminar on the topic organized in the afternoon.
- **28 September. Cervignano, Italy. Project dissemination**
Patrizia Quattrocchi presented the public talk "Nascere lascia il segno. Parto rispettato e diritti riproduttivi",



NEXT YEAR IN SALAMANCA!!!!

Patrizia Quattrocchi and Natalia Magnone's symposium proposal "*Derechos y violencias en la atención del embarazo, parto y nacimiento: alcances y desafíos en la investigación y la política de salud*" was accepted at the 56th International Congress of Americanists (July 2018, Salamanca, Spain). See you in Salamanca!!!

See you in March 2018 with the next newsletter



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