

## PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PROJECT

### “THE NEW GOAL FOR RESEARCH, POLICIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS ON CHILDBIRTH

Newsletter n. 1/March 2017



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.

#### OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE

OR

#### GYNECOLOGIC AND OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE?



El Área de Género de Departamento de Trabajo Social de FCS y el Grupo Cuerpo, Género y Sexualidad de FHCE invitan a la actividad:

Esperamos a estudiantes, activistas y profesionales interesados/as en diferentes formas de concebir el parto y nacimiento. Estamos frente a una coyuntura donde el modelo biomédico de asistencia está mostrando dificultades para ofrecer el cuidado que muchas mujeres necesitan. Para mejorar la calidad de atención precisamos un cambio paradigmático. Invitamos a ser parte de este intercambio.

Exponen:

- **Doctora en Antropología Patrizia Quattrocchi.**

Trabajó por nueve años con parteras y mujeres mayas en Yucatán (México) y acaba de finalizar una investigación sobre parto extra-hospitalario en Casas de Nacer y parto domiciliar en Europa.

- **Partera Silvia Sosa.**

Integrante de Nacer Mejor, organización que desde hace 18 años acompaña el embarazo, nacimiento, lactancia y crianza contribuyendo al desarrollo de la autonomía de las mujeres y sus familias en la toma de decisiones en salud sexual y reproductiva. Promoviendo las destrezas y saberes de las parteras y su autonomía profesional.

Modera:

- **Trabajadora Social Natalia Magnone.**

Investigadora sobre las condiciones de asistencia al parto en Uruguay.

Se contará con intérprete de lengua de señas durante toda la actividad



### Interview with the researcher

Jornal “Viento del Sur”  
 Universidad Nacional de Lanús  
[www.unla.edu.ar/vientosur/vientosur14/book.swf](http://www.unla.edu.ar/vientosur/vientosur14/book.swf)  
 vol. 14, 2016, : 40-43

### Project dissemination at

“Primer Congreso Internacional de Parteras Cosmopolitas”  
 AAPI-Asociación Argentina de Parteras Independientes  
 Buenos Aires  
 11- 13 November 2016

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.

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## ACTIVITIES (October 2016 - March 2017)

- Reviewing of the literature on OV and collecting statistical data.
- Contacting experts, academics, and institutions.
- Identifying possible stakeholders.
- Designing an interview grid for key informants and a questionnaire for students/specialists/residents in health.
- Interviewing key persons and identifying "case studies".
- Participating in congresses (as a speaker/lecturer) and special events and conducting seminars and workshops.
- Organising researcher training activities
- Participating in dissemination events
- Disseminating information from the project in public events
- Fieldwork in Buenos Aires, in Cordoba (Argentina) and Montevideo (Uruguay)

## FOCUS ON SOME ACTIVITIES

- Observing and participating in the activity of **LAS CASILDAS** Civil Association ([www.lascasildas.com.ar](http://www.lascasildas.com.ar)), promoter of the **OBSERVATORY ON OV** in Argentina and of the theatre play **Parir(NOS)**. The activities carried out include:

- **Interviewing the founders** Julieta Saulo e Violeta Osorio, who report the news on their website:



*Las Casildas · 29 gennaio · Desde Italia vinieron a entrevistar a Julieta Saulo, coordinadora de Las Casildas y el OVO, para analizar el proceso histórico, social y político que ha llevado al reconocimiento legal de la VO en nuestro país y en otros países de Latinoamérica. La información es poder. SIEMPRE!*

(<https://www.it-it.el-gr.fbjs.facebook.com/las.casildas.3/>)

In the photo: Patrizia Quattrocchi photographed by the interviewee during the interview. On the left: logo de “Las Casildas”

- **Conducting/attending seminars at the seminar series “Parto como sistema de poder o el poder del sistema sobre escena del parto”.** The researcher conducted a seminar at the 2nd meeting of the series and participated as attendant in the 3rd, Las Casildas, 8 and 22 February 2017.



This is a cycle of seminar meetings (up to 6 people invited) whose purpose is to analyse and discuss topics related to pregnancy and childbirth from a critical perspective. The aim is to strengthen the exercise of reproductive rights by women. The goal of each cycle is to set up an action device (an event, a tool, a strategy, etc.) for participants to apply in their own context of interest.  
In the photo: attendants at the third meeting, Buenos Aires, 22 February 2017.

- **Observing the theatrical performance of “Parir(NOS)” plus public debate**



Staging the theatrical work "Parir(NOS)", which, through the stories of 4 women, offers a critical reflection on childbirth and birth models. At the end of the performance, Observatory of OV and the data collected by the first national inquiry on birth and caesarean section are presented and discussed in a public debate. (Photo: Performance at the Faculty of Medicine, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 19 November 2016.

- Participating in the **FESTIVAL DEL PARTO RESPETADO**, 19 March 2017, Buenos Aires. During the festival, the play "**Parir(NOS)**" was performed, followed by a debate coordinated by Las Casildas members.



- Visiting the Hospital **MATERNIDAD ESTELA DE CARLOTTO**, in Moreno, interviewing the 3 directors of the hospital and attending the "Reunión de Equipo" event, 23 e 24 November 2016



It is a public hospital founded in 2013. It implements an innovative model in the national landscape which - according to the Ley X and UNICEF programmes - focuses on the needs of women and babies, avoiding unnecessary medicalization. In approximately 3,000 births so far, the caesarean rate was less than 14%, more than 93% of women were able to choose their own companion, and the rate of oxytocin used was 1.6%. These are important indicators in a country in which the caesarean section rate is 30.6% in the public sector and between 60 and 70% in the private sector and where many women delivered without their partners and without any possibility of negotiation with respect to the position of childbirth and with other routine practices often carried out without consensus or information. To know the Maternity: <https://vimeo.com/130027641> (video produced by Unicef) <https://www.facebook.com/pg/maternidaddemoreno>

## THE WORDS OF OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE

The literature on OV is becoming conspicuous. In this section, we present terms and concepts emerging from the review of some publications. The idea is to build a **GLOSSARY** and an **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY** as tools for better understanding the concept and its potentialities. From the review carried out so far, it appears that OV refers to:



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## See you in December 2017 with the next newsletter

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project website: under construction

