Fathers’ experience of home birth in four Nordic countries:
“This was the right decision”

Dr Ólöf Ásta Ólafsdóttir, Associate Professor  Department of Midwifery, Faculty of Nursing, University of Iceland
A web based questionnaire is used for collecting quantitative and qualitative data from women and their partners/fathers as well as the attending midwife about homebirth. The open question for qualitative data is:

Please, describe the birth with your own words.
Analysis of qualitative data
Narrative analysis

• What is the narrative meaning of birth stories, the women, their partners and midwives are telling?

• What is the core narrative?
Aims of this study

The aim was to explore how fathers describe, tell and write about their experience of homebirth?

What are the main narrative themes of the fathers’ telling / writing?
Data collection

Narratives, text from open question

• Nearly 400 narratives from the year 2009-直到 now

Denmark (250), Sweden (70), Norway (28), and Iceland (45).
Narrative analysis - meaning

In choosing how to tell or write about their experience of homebirth the fathers convey a meaning they intend to be taken from their narrative.

The underlying meaning by a plot makes a point and evaluation.

(Polkinghorne, 1995)
Narrative meaning „wonderful experience“

• Frábær upplifun. Algjörlega rétt ákvörðun fyrir okkur. (I)

• En alldeles underbar upplevelse. Dette burde flere oppleve!. (N)

• Lugn, trygg och häftig. En fantastisk og flott opplevelse. (S)

• Stor, hurtig, impulsiv og fantastisk oplevelse. (DK)
Father, with woman and baby
Narrative main themes

- Being in control in a safe environment
- This was the right decision
- Positive relations with mother and the family
- Happenings during the process of birth
- Trust in the midwife’s professional competence
Narrative with evaluation from an Icelandic father

- When preparing for the birth [making the decision] I sensed how the midwife was confident as a professional, it was good to know that this person would assist us at the birth. During the birth the atmosphere was controlled, calm and safe… and in this situation it is really good to stay at home, and the first minutes and hours were wonderful…
The homebirth was also a good choice for the sister and brother. They came, right away to bed with mam and dad, soon after the birth, an event which would probably not have been as homelike in an institution and for the children not as much a sense of security.
Decision making, informed choice and preparation

Being in control in a safe environment at home

Family event
Positive relationships
Proud emotions
Calm and peace
Empowerment
Love and support

“we did it together”

Different birth stories
Timeline, (when to call the midwife), practical things, problems, (midwife to late) transfer to hospital happenings of birth process

“wonderful experience”

Trust in midwife’s care
Professional competence
Safety of mother and baby
Reciprocal relations in meeting wishes and
The mother’s strength and knowledge

“others should know”

Core Narrative of fathers experiences of homebirth in four Nordic countries
“This was the right decision”
Positive relations with the mother and the family

• ...Min kone var sin sedvanlige superkvinne...Det var greit å ha jordmødrene tilstede for selve fødselen (og spesielt etter), men det var veldig lite behov for støtte fra dem, slik jeg opplevde det. Alle de tre storebrødrene fikk med seg fødselen og minsten klippet navlestrengen. Svigermor var også tilstede... Narrative from Norway
Trust in professional competence of the midwife

• jeg var i tvivl om hvornar vi skulle ringe efter jordmoderen, og hvornar vi kunne forvente at hun var her. Da hun kom folte jeg mig tryg, og hele processen var virkelig fantastisk og det hele gik meget staerkt.

Narrative from Denmark
Happenings during the process of birth


Narrative from Sweden
Hvis det skulle være noe negativt

• så må det være at eg kunne tenkt meg å ha tatt ennå mer del i fødselen.

• Jag gjorde dock det som min partner behövde ...
  ...men jag känner mig lite snuvad på konfetten

• Det eneste vi manglede under fødslen var en ekstra hjælper(familiemedlem/ven) til de praktiske opgaver(mad, drikkelse, oprydning)
„This was the right decision“

• In the beginning I was negative, really until the birth started... I have always been very stressed during the birth of my children. This time I was calm and I felt good.

• Var noget skeptisk da idéen ble lansert, men etter samtaler med mor og jordmor om hva det faktisk innebærer, så hadde jeg ingen problemer med det.

• Det var vidunderligt i dejlige rolige og trygge omgivelser. vil helt sikkert anbefale det til andre.
Discussion

- Research show the importance of fathers’ support for the mother in homebirth, helping her to use her own strength, trusting and following the mother through her birth process.

The next steps of analysis
ongoing research, using mixed methods

- The process and influence on decision making
- Transfers to hospital, health of mother and baby, risk and safety issues
- Relationships between parents and the family and others attending the birth
- Interactions with midwife in more depth
- The mothers’ narratives compare, with the fathers’
- Experiences of pain, length of labour...
Nordic Homebirth Research

Status of Homebirth in Iceland

Dr Ólög Ásta Ólafsdóttir, Associate Professor Department of Midwifery, Faculty of Nursing, University of Iceland

Berglind Halfdansdottir, midwife, PhD student, Department of Midwifery, Faculty of Nursing, University of Iceland

Kristbjorg Magnusdottir, homebirth midwife, Reykjavík

Malfridur Thordardottir, homebirth midwife, Akureyri
Iceland started late 2010 to collect data and it will close by the end of 2013, in the period about 300-350 births

We have now data from?
- Mothers
- Fathers
- Midwives

Ways to increase answer rate....
Iceland

- 2012: 4450 births
- Places of birth 9 (in 1972, 25)
- Fertility rate 2.04
- Total number of midwives? 200-250
- All maternity care provided by midwives, midwifery led and shared responsibly with doctors
- Homebirth paid by insurance / government
- Caesarean rate 15.4 %
Hombirth rate increasing

(Dr. Alexander Kr. Smárason, e.d.)
Iceland

• National guidelines about choice of place of birth in 2007
• Homebirths available within the health care system by private midwives
• 2010: Homebirth registered 86 1.8 %
• 2011: Home births registered 94 2.1 %
• 2012: Homebirth registered 99 2.2 %
• 2013: Decreasing? in September about 56 births?
• Discourse in media, impact of social narratives about safety of homebirth?
Mothers‘ and fathers‘ core narrative
and the social narrative about homebirth?

Decision making - Informed choice - Preparation

Family event
- Being in control at home
- In a safe environment

Mothers‘ Birth stories
- The process of birth
- Doing the work of giving birth with partner, family, friends

Fathers‘ Birth story, The process of birth

This was the right decision
- We did it together
- Wonderful experience
- Other should know

Supporting role
- Handling practical things

Discourse about safety and risk in relation to homebirth
- Different views in society and belief systems in the health care

The right to have a choice of place of birth and evidenced based care