Ancient Egyptian Women’s Health Care in Relation to Modern Women’s Health Care Practices: An Overview

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Abstract:

This article will address ancient Egyptians’ knowledge of the childbirth cycle from preconception to postpartum and the similarities of these practices to modern knowledge and practice. From developing the first recorded pregnancy test to using the favorable position of squatting in labor, the ancient Egyptians exhibited a base of knowledge that more recent use of the scientific method has confirmed. Other practices, such as methods of contraception, can be seen as steps in the evolution of methods used today. Ancient Egyptians emphasized maternal nutrition during pregnancy and care of the newborn and mother immediately postpartum. Newborn assessment in ancient Egypt consisted of two parameters—cry and muscle tone—that exhibits a historical technique analogous to the modern Apgar score. Evidence also indicates that the ancient Egyptians devised strategies to suture perineal tears and manage other postpartum complications. In addition to practices related to pregnancy and childbirth, other contributions of these ancient people to medical practice and vocabulary were associated with general women’s health.

Keywords:

Egypt; history; contraception; labor; delivery; postpartum

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