

Free app on post-natal care for new parents

Developed by NUS and NUH, phone app will be tested with hospitals before public release

Camillia Deborah Dass

Parents with newborn children will be able to refer to a local mobile application for help next year.

Called Home But Not Alone, the free app is being developed here to provide information on post-natal care to new parents who may be stressed out while caring for their newborn on their own.

The app covers topics ranging from breastfeeding to bathing a baby and delivers the information through documents, videos and audio clips. It also answers questions by parents and addresses myths regarding the care of babies.

For instance, the app debunks the belief that you can give babies water to drink at any age.

Research shows that babies should not be given too much water to drink until the age of six months.

The reason? Babies become full if they drink a lot of water and will not want to drink milk.

Home But Not Alone is being made by a research team of six hospital midwives, clinicians and researchers from the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and the National University Hospital. The team is led by Assistant Professor Shafaly Shorey, 38, from NUS' Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies.

Parents moving between the maternity ward and the home setting often find it quite stressful, Prof Shorey said in a media briefing yesterday. "New parents, espe-

cially, feel overwhelmed by the amount of information given to them by healthcare providers during their short stay, and some have difficulties retaining the information," she said.

The app aims to alleviate some of that stress by delivering post-natal care information to them.

The Home But Not Alone beta app was piloted over six months from December 2015 to May last year. Some 126 people, or 63 couples, received educational support through the app during the trial. These couples were then compared against 62 couples who were in a control group.

Parents in the control group received routine maternity care provided by the hospital.

Parents were surveyed after four weeks of having access to the beta app and most of them became more confident in taking care of their babies.

Mr Zhang Han, 34, an assistant manager who has a one-year-old baby girl, said: "It's good because you are no longer just looking at Google for information but you have professional information."

He and his wife used the beta app during the first six months after the baby was born and found useful information on how to swaddle her and what to do with her rashes.

The team behind the app (which will be available in Android and iOS) is looking to test it with leading hospitals before releasing it.

cdass@sph.com.sg



Assistant Professor Shafaly Shorey from NUS' Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies showing Mr Zhang Han and his wife, Ms Hu Dan (carrying baby Zhang Mueu), how to retrieve information from the mobile app. ST PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

PROFESSIONAL INFO

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