

CONSERVING THE CONVENTIONAL INDIGENOUS POSTNATAL CARE: A CASE OF SARAWAK'S MALAY PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

In Sarawak's Malay society, the conventional ways of treating mothers in confinement, include the use of herbal treatments, and age-old ways of physical care. However, the underlying philosophies of the most do's and don'ts during the postnatal are not clearly explained, and neither are they properly documented. Hence, realizing the need for the conservation of indigenous knowledge, this paper is to document and explain the conventional Malay's ways of postnatal care. The conventional practices of postnatal care discussed in this paper are qualitatively narrated through autoethnographic recorded experiences of the first author. The Sarawak's Malay postnatal care is classified into five functions and labelled as curing, cleansing, heating and toning, energizing, and gastronomy. Significantly, the findings would assure that with proper postnatal care, the risk of *meruyan* (postnatal blues) could be reduced, and to conveys two essential benefits of longevity and fertility of the womenfolk. Conservation and preservation of conventional social elements are significant as tutelage for the future generations as well as for establishing a national identity. It is our obligation to keep the indigenous (postpartum care) knowledge is properly documented in preserving the social identity, especially among Malays in Sarawak.