

Birth, Breastfeeding and Postpartum Depression at a Maternity Hospital in Hangzhou, China

 By Kathleen Kendall-Tackett, PhD, IBCLC, FAPA

In May 2015, I was invited to spend a week at the Hangzhou AIMA Maternity Hospital in Hangzhou, China. Hangzhou is the capital of the Zhejiang Province and is on the eastern coast between Shanghai and Ningbo. Hangzhou is the fourth-largest city in China, with a population of 21 million people. It is a major tourist attraction for the Chinese and is an affluent city. Even in the middle of the week, the tourist sites were packed with people. It is also a very mobile-friendly society, and most of the young people walked around carrying their phones in their hands. Facebook, Google and other social-networking sites are blocked in China. However, there are Chinese equivalents, and many young Chinese spend their time on a social site called "We Text."

There are very few Westerners in Hangzhou, and the ones I saw at the tourist sites were speaking German. I was often the only Westerner and was enough of an oddity that people would openly stare. I would smile at them, and they would usually respond with friendly grins and waves.

At the hospital

The AIMA Maternity Hospital is Chinese but was founded by Americans. It is a private maternity hospital with a large clientele among the internationals who live in Hangzhou. It also has many Chinese patients who have private health insurance.

The AIMA Maternity Hospital staff is working very hard to improve both birthing practices and breastfeeding.



Some of the shops near the hospital

Outside the main entry gate (note the American flag in the courtyard)

The hospital's cesarean rate is currently more than 40 percent. They started a doula program, have midwives and offer Lamaze classes and water births. They are also fairly far along in their work toward becoming a Baby-Friendly Hospital. Americans have trained the staff and helped start their doula program. The marketing department developed a short cartoon clip that they show to parents at the beginning of class describing the programs offered at the hospital. This cartoon used photographs of heads that

were animated over cartoon bodies, and I was very surprised to see my friend Barbara Hotelling's face float by. I was also surprised to see my face in the very next shot.

Staff trainings

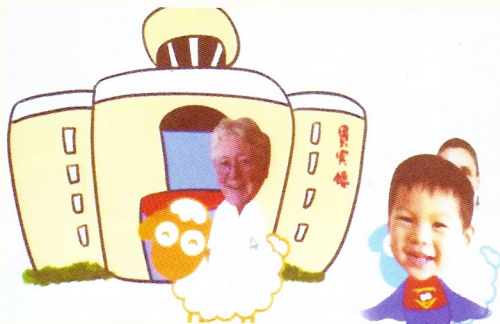
I had been invited to teach two trainings on depression and breastfeeding for the nurses and medical staff. I taught these classes with my translator, Alisa Hu, working beside me for every training.



Liz Jiang at her IBCLC training course (Liz on the far left)



Teaching a staff training with midwife Liz Jiang



Barbara Hotelling provided training during an earlier visit and was featured in this marketing video.



My face was also included in their video.



Training for the nursing staff



I was asked to teach them about postpartum depression and breastfeeding. They had a large banner in their classroom announcing their program on postpartum depression.



Teaching prenatal classes. Many grandmothers also attend these with their daughters.

DID YOU KNOW?

Valuable information is gleaned from every doula experience!

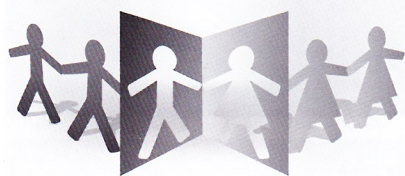
COMPLETE A BIRTH OR POSTPARTUM DATA COLLECTION FORM

for each and every experience YOU attend as a DONA doula and mail or fax it to the DONA home office:

35 East Wacker Drive, Suite 850,
Chicago, IL 60601
FAX: (312) 644-8557



certification committee



DONA certified birth and postpartum doulas, fluent in English and Spanish, volunteer to serve on the certification committee.

CONTACT:
certificationdirector
@DONA.org



(Left) With some of the nurses at International Day of the Nurse celebration. The director of nursing is standing behind me. (Below) At the postpartum tea with a group of mothers still in the hospital. The special tea and fruit served at the postpartum reception.



While teaching these sessions, I met a midwife named Liz Jiang. She shared with me her dream of becoming an IBCLC (International Board Certified Lactation Consultant). I happily connected her with some colleagues in Shanghai, and she recently wrote to tell me that she attended an eight-day training course in Shanghai for aspiring IBCLCs. She is thrilled and sent some pictures of her at the training course.

At the second training for the medical staff, the Chief of Medicine presented me with an academic appointment: Outpatient Expert for International Medical Care — Postpartum Depression Care.

Pre- and postnatal classes

I also taught six classes for new and expecting parents. They had many questions about labor, birth, breastfeeding and infant sleep. I typically answered questions for more than an hour and a half for each class. Although I was not there to teach about labor, mothers did ask me questions. One mother was trying to decide if she was going to go through labor or opt for an

elective cesarean. I described how a doula could help her by giving her strategies to cope with pain and being there to support her when she felt like she just could not continue. I was happy that the hospital offered doulas to mothers. While mothers are still in the hospital, they bring them together for a small party. I taught a session for these mothers and also answered a lot of questions. Mothers attend in their pajamas, and they serve a really elegant tea with beautifully presented sliced fruit.

International Day of the Nurse

On my final night, I was invited to join the nurses for their International Day of the Nurse dinner. This was a special occasion for the nurses, and I was honored to be asked to join them.

At the dinner, the hospital CEO presented me with a beautiful scarf made with Hangzhou silk. He told me that, based on my visit, they decided to hire a psychologist to help new mothers with depression. I was quite pleased. I was also happy that I had a chance to meet such warm and lovely people and have promised to return.