

COUVADE SYNDROME

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ABSTRACT

The term couvade was first used by the anthropologist E. B. Tylor in 1865. It describes certain father-hood rituals performed by husbands while their wives were giving birth. In some cultures the expectant father avoids eating certain foods or handling knives or other sharp tools while the mother is in labor. In Papua New Guinea the father builds a hut apart from the rest of the village and goes to bed when his wife's childbirth begins. He then stays in bed and imitates the pains of childbirth until the baby is born. A similar custom is observed among the Basques.

Psychosomatic refers to physical symptoms that are significantly influenced by emotional factors. Doctors regard couvade syndrome as a psychosomatic condition.

KEYWORDS: Couvade Syndrome, Bency Abraham, Clinical Instructor