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Title:

Birthplace in Australia: Supporting woman centred care in homebirth transfer

Research abstract, Oral presentation

Sub theme: Midwives: Making a difference through partnerships

Purpose

To explore the views and experiences of women, midwives and obstetricians involved in intrapartum transfers from planned homebirth to hospital.

Methods

Thirty-six semi-structured interviews were conducted with women and caregivers in four states of south-eastern Australia. Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology enabled the conceptualization of the social interactions and processes that emerged from the data.

Findings

Four categories emerged from the analysis, 'Fostering relationships and reducing uncertainty', 'Transferring out of the comfort zone', 'Us and them' and 'Defining roles and sharing goals'.

Intrapartum transfer from planned homebirth resulted in a convergence of women, midwives and obstetricians who possessed conflicting paradigms of childbearing that were derived from a range of educational, professional and life experiences. Polarised perspectives of risk and safety meant that the evidence, particularly in relation to place of birth, was interpreted in a variety of ways. The unique context of homebirth transfer required caregivers to move out of their comfort zones. The resulting uncertainty often manifested in 'us and them' dynamics. When transferring women made the journey to hospital, they also made psychological journeys out of their comfort zones.

Smooth collaboration ensued when shared goals were identified. 'Healthy mother and a healthy baby' was a universal goal, commonly defined as 'physically alive and well'. For women, however, 'healthy' encompassed deeper meanings that emerged from psychological, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual domains.

Application to practice

Supporting woman centred care in homebirth transfer is grounded in respect for what 'healthy mother and healthy baby' means to each individual childbearing woman. From the perspective of Australian law, health care policy and human rights principles, the woman's definition has authority and is unimpeachable. Sensitivity to this may create greater collaborative focus and establish a path to more respectful care for women and their babies.