

This abstract is aligned with the following three Congress themes and key words:

- **Equity in health** – human rights
- **Gender** – women’s health
- **Life stages** – maternal health

Oral presentation preferred, please

Authors:

Deborah Fox, Athena Sheehan, Caroline Homer

Title:

Birthplace in Australia: Processes of referral and transfer from planned homebirth to hospital

Background

Planned homebirth is safe for low risk women when professional midwifery care and arrangements for medical referral and transfer are in place. Despite low rates of homebirth in many developed countries, there remains a demand for homebirth services. From the perspective of human rights, women are autonomous in choosing where they plan to give birth. Smooth processes for transfer to hospital are a crucial element of the provision of safe maternity care.

Aim

Much is known about rates of transfer, but little is known about the experiences of the women and caregivers involved. This presentation explores the processes and interactions that took place in the context of transfer from home to hospital.

Method

Semi structured interviews were conducted with women and caregivers. Constructivist grounded theory methodology enabled an analytic focus upon social process.

Results

Women in labour were moved out of the comfort zone of their home, where they had planned to give birth; however, they also made a psychological journey out of their comfort zone, as they faced managing changing expectations and a new environment. Midwives and obstetricians who converged on the birthing rooms of transferred women also moved out of their comfort zones, as they grappled to collaborate with caregivers who possessed a range of paradigms. Roles, responsibilities and routines were challenged, requiring sensitive communication in order to avoid the generation of *us and them* dynamics. Effective collaboration flourished and the quality of care was optimised when such behaviours were ameliorated by a woman centred approach to care.

Deborah Fox completed her doctorate at the Centre for Midwifery, Child and Family Health at the University of Technology Sydney. Her research focusses upon place of birth and transdisciplinary collaboration in maternity care in the public health sector, especially in the care of women experiencing childbearing complications.