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Midwifery care of newborn babies with ambiguous genitalia

Background

Approximately one in 5000 babies are born with ambiguous genitalia, usually unexpectedly. Research shows that parents often experience difficulty accessing information and receive inconsistent language from health professionals. Initial support from the birth team may have long term consequences for families with babies born with ambiguous genitalia.

Purpose

In Australia, the medical management of babies with atypical genitalia is evolving in response to feedback from adults born with ambiguous genitalia who advocate for the elimination of infant genital surgery and for more transparent management by health professionals. Support by midwives can potentially have a life-long impact on parents, individuals with ambiguous genitalia and their community. Currently there is insufficient literature in the Australian context exploring midwives' experiences of working in this area.

Aim

The aim is to learn more about current practices on the day of birth, and explore existing knowledge gaps for midwives. This information will guide the development of educational materials that will enable them to respond appropriately when the sex of a newborn baby is unclear.

Methods

A recruitment flyer was posted on social media inviting interested midwives to participate. Further participants were recruited via a snowball sampling technique. We conducted 20 semi structured interviews with midwives about their experiences of caring for families of babies born with ambiguous genitalia. Data was analysed thematically and synthesised with data from international literature on the topic.

Key findings

Key findings will be presented at the conference, along with the design and content of the webinar that will be curated and presented in collaboration with the Australian College of Midwives.

Implications for practice

The webinar will provide midwives and students with the appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to respond confidently at the birth of a baby with ambiguous genitalia.