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Women's Barriers to Use of Midwives During Birth: An Integrative Literature Review

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Abstract

Background: Currently, nearly one third of all women give birth by cesarean section. A cesarean delivery carries a chance of incurring a variety of health complications. However, research demonstrates that the utilization of a midwife during the birthing process may reduce the risk of complications. The midwifery model of care provides the mother with education, counseling, pre-natal care, hands on assistance during labor/delivery, and post-partum care. Despite this fact, midwives are underutilized; present at less than ten percent of all births. If midwifery was more well-understood, evident, and available as an option for low risk births, the incidence of their presence during births may increase.

Objectives: This integrative literature review examined research regarding the barriers to using midwives during birth. This includes exploring women's perceptions of birth, their awareness of birthing options, and the barriers to accessing these options.

Methods: This integrative literature review used a matrix method to classify the data. From this method, seventeen papers were used to provide data for this review. Three of these papers provided specific data relating to the use of midwives during the birthing process; six papers focused on women's perceptions and awareness of options during the birthing process, four papers compared and contrasted births with obstetricians versus midwives, and four papers viewed options to increase women's awareness of their options during the birthing process.

Conclusion: This integrative literature review found that women who have utilized a midwife during the childbirth process have had positive experiences. Because of this positive experience and reduction of risk, evidence suggests that women should be educated regarding birth options.

Keywords: midwifery, midwife, perceptions, barriers, birth