

FATHERS' PRESENCE IN THE DELIVERY ROOM – IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE.

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OBJECTIVES

- (i) To explore the views of obstetricians and registered nurses/midwives about expectant fathers' presence in the delivery room;
- (ii) To identify possible positive or negative benefits of expectant fathers' presence to their practice;
- (iii) To identify views about possible situations that would facilitate or not facilitate fathers' presence in the delivery room.

METHODS

A qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to understand the nuances and challenges that affect the perceptions and attitudes of Obstetricians and registered Nurses/Midwives on the research issue. Five focus group discussions and five key informant interviews were the data collection strategies. Data were coded openly then combined to form themes which was utilized as the framework for data analysis.

RESULTS

Generally, participants held positive views about having expectant fathers' present in the delivery room with positive as well as negative implications for practice. Four major themes emerged from the findings which included perception of the Obstetrician/Registered Nurse/Midwife, demands on the practitioner, support for staff and potential challenges. With staff shortage, prospective fathers' could assume a central role in monitoring and reporting changes in the status of the woman in labour. However, depending on the nature of the delivery experience, this could have negative implications for the prospective father as well as increase the demands on the professional in clinical practice. Communication skills was identified as a critical skill needed, especially in emergency setting as it could be a source of contention if done incorrectly or exacerbate negative perceptions of staff by prospective fathers.

CONCLUSIONS

The presence of prospective fathers in the delivery room could have a positive impact on the delivery experience for mothers, fathers and health professionals. Prospective fathers' involvement in delivery could support the role of the health professionals, especially in contexts where there is staff shortage as well as enhance the positive perceptions of health personnel in cases of positive outcomes in emergency settings. However, depending on the context, it could place additional demands on the health team especially in emergency situations.

References

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