

Saving lives with caring assessments: How Tanzanian nurse-midwives and obstetricians negotiate postpartum practices

Thecla W Kohi PhD, MN, RNM, Megan Aston PhD, RN, Lilian T Mselle PhD, MPhil, RNM, Danielle Macdonald MSN, BSc, Columba Mbekenga PhD, MSc, BScN ... See all authors

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Abstract

Aims and objectives

To explore the nurse-midwives' and obstetricians' experiences delivering postpartum care assessments and how it was constructed through personal, social and institutional discourses.

Introduction

The Tanzanian Government has prioritised maternal and child health as an urgent healthcare issue. Nurse-midwives and obstetricians are the two main providers of care throughout the prenatal and postpartum periods.

Design

A qualitative design guided by a feminist poststructuralist methodology.

Methods

Ten nurse-midwives and three obstetricians from three Regional Hospitals in Dar es Salaam participated in individual semi-structured in-depth interviews.

Results

Assessment emerged as a significant theme with three subthemes. Nurse-midwives shared their beliefs and values about assessments that focused on the safety of mothers and babies. They felt proud working with mothers and babies and shared their frustrations having to deal with

inadequate working conditions. Guidelines and practices were part of the institutional discourse that impacted the day-to-day experiences of nurse-midwives and obstetricians. The nurse-midwives held the belief that it was vital to complete a comprehensive assessment to identify danger signs, keep mothers and babies safe and look for any abnormalities. They were concerned that mothers were being sent home too early.

Conclusions

Nurse-midwives' experiences in the provision of postpartum care portray that these health providers work heartedly to make sure that the mothers and their newborns receive the best care they can provide. The health system is challenged to address the needed supplies and equipment for reproductive health in particular postpartum care services.

Relevance to clinical practice

Institutional health discourses significantly affect the practice of nurse-midwives and obstetricians to deliver timely and effective postpartum assessments. Immediate and ongoing postpartum assessments conducted by nurse-midwives and obstetricians can save lives. This study presents the first theme of the study: Caring assessments save lives.