

Western Australian Midwives' Experience of Clinical Supervision

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ABSTRACT

Background

Clinical supervision is considered to be a professional practice that builds resilience in nurses and midwives by supporting and promoting their emotional wellbeing. In Western Australia (WA), student midwives receive regular point of care clinical supervision in the clinical setting. There appears to be no evidence that midwives in WA access formal clinical supervision to reflect on their practice after qualifying as a midwife.

Aims

This research sought to understand WA midwives experience, perception and knowledge of clinical supervision.

Methods

A qualitative exploratory-descriptive approach with a mixed method data collection was employed. Purposeful and snowball sampling were used, with midwives sought from a variety of healthcare facilities. Qualtrics online questionnaire, consisting of 19 items; 12 closed-ended questions, three Likert scales and four open-ended questions was completed fully by 244 midwives. The principles of thematic analysis were used to code and interpret the qualitative data. As this study is descriptive, the expected outcome of data analysis is an analysed descriptive summary of the experiences in question.

Results

Overwhelmingly the majority of respondents experienced clinical supervision as point of care clinical supervision in the clinical setting, mainly referring to the supervision of student or junior midwives. There was acknowledgement that clinical supervision could provide midwives with much needed 'emotional support' and should be available. Lack of protected time and the ability to attend clinical supervision as well as lack of policy and structure to support clinical supervision, were all identified as barriers to accessing clinical supervision.

Recommendations

There needs to be strong and consistent organisational support for clinical supervision to be adopted as a core component of midwifery practice. Support and access to clinical supervision should be evident at all levels of the organisation, with clear policies and procedures put in place to enable midwives to attend regular clinical supervision sessions.