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The Experience of Midwives who Work in a Dual Role as Nurse and Midwife in Rural Facilities in North Queensland, Australia

Authors: Karen Yates

The experience of midwives who work in a dual role as nurse and midwife in rural facilities in north Queensland, Australia.

Background

Closure of Australian rural birthing services due to workforce shortages has serious implications for birthing women, their families, and the community. It has also had a huge impact on midwives who may find themselves in positions where they are forced to work as both a rural generalist and a midwife within the same facility and even perhaps during the same shift. This has the potential to create role conflict or role ambiguity, a known factor that impacts on job satisfaction and workforce retention. This has serious implications for maternity workforce in rural areas, already experiencing shortages.

Aim

The aim of this study was to use a phenomenological approach to explore the experience of midwives who worked in a dual role of generalist nurse and midwife in a small rural hospital.

Method

A purposive sampling method was utilised and midwives working in a dual role in rural facilities were invited to participate in the study. Data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews which were then transcribed and analysed using van Manen's methodological approach.

Ethics

Approval was granted by the relevant University and Health District Human Research Ethics Committee.

Key findings

Three themes were identified to illustrate the experience of working in a dual role as nurse and midwife in a rural areas.

These were:

1. "Because I choose to live here" (Choice/no choice)
2. "All in together, whatever the weather" (Integration)
3. "That's part of working in a small place" (Realities of rural).

Implications

Identification of the experiences of midwives required to work in dual roles provides insight into the contradictions faced by these midwives in the conduct of their role in a rural facility. Better understanding