Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

The Role of Midwives in U.S. Perinatal Palliative Care: A Scoping Review

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Introduction: Perinatal palliative care (PPC) is a rapidly growing and essential reproductive health care option for pregnant persons with a diagnosed life-limiting fetal condition who continue their pregnancy. The provision of PPC is within the scope of basic midwifery competencies, and midwives are well-positioned to make unique and valuable contributions to interprofessional PPC teams. However, little is known about midwives' past or current involvement in PPC in the United States.

Methods: This scoping review of the literature investigated what is known about the role of midwives in PPC in the United States. Multiple databases of published literature were used for this review: PubMed, CINAHL, Embase, Web of Science, ProQuest, Google Scholar, and relevant citations from identified studies. All types of English language publications addressing midwives' involvement in PPC in the United States were included, without any limitations on publication date.

Results: The role and contributions of midwives in PPC is not well represented in existing literature. Of the 259 results identified, 7 publications met criteria for inclusion. These included 5 case reports, one quantitative research article, and one conference abstract. Midwives are involved in PPC through the provision of direct clinical care (including antepartum, intrapartum, postpartum, neonatal, bereavement, postmortem, and follow-up care) and care planning and coordination as part of an interprofessional team.

Discussion: Despite midwives being uniquely positioned to provide holistic, family-centered, and person-centered care in situations of pregnancy with life-limiting fetal conditions, there is limited literature about their involvement in PPC in the United States. PPC should be incorporated into midwifery education and training programs. Midwives should play a central role in shaping future research and policies to ensure the accessibility and quality of PPC.

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