

ABSTRACTS

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SOUTH AFRICAN MIDWIVES' KNOWLEDGE ON PLACENTAL TRIAGE

Background:

Risk and litigation in the field of obstetrics in South Africa has risen exponentially, making it vital to limit litigation. Placental histology investigates placental pathology, providing insight into complications, stillbirths and adverse outcomes. The evidence obtained from these reports are vital to attest litigation. With financial and resource constraints, not all placentas can be sent for histology. Fortunately, physical atypical parameters of the placenta can be indicative of adverse conditions during macroscopic examination. Performing a "triage" on placentas can be done at no cost, filtering suspicious placentas for histology. However, the physical triage of placentas cannot be done if knowledge on the normal and abnormal structures of the placenta is not sufficient amongst midwives.

Aims and Objectives:

The study aimed to describe the existing knowledge of placental triage amongst South African educated midwives. The objectives were to determine midwives' knowledge regarding the physical structures and macroscopic examination of the placenta, and to describe current knowledge amongst midwives about placental histology and its benefits.

Findings:

A quantitative research approach with a survey method was used. The developed questionnaire reached 157 participants that differed in age, education, and practice environments (Private/Government sector). Findings confirmed that a third of midwives did not examine placentas routinely and they had only 60% knowledge on the placental characteristics. Placental histology services are only available in 61% of sites thus confirming the need for placental triage to sieve placentas needing investigation. When asked if they knew what the placental histology results can be used for, over 40% did not know and 30% thought it is just for diagnostics, like other laboratory tests. 97% confirmed further training is needed.

Conclusion:

Information and education must be provided on placental examination and the contribution it provides as part of our first-line defence in litigation. The researcher intends to develop further education for midwives, standard triage guidelines and documentation for this purpose, as none are available in South Africa. Litigation costs in the field of maternal and child health makes examination of the placenta vital in the prevention of litigation cases and for future treatment of the mother and baby.

Key words: Placental triage, midwifery education, litigation.

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