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Midwives’ practice during the second stage of physiological labour: A systematic review

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Background

A midwife’s practice can be influenced by education and cultural practices, but ultimately it should be based on current research evidence. It is a research priority, to identify midwifery care that optimises and interrupts the physiological processes for women and their babies during childbirth (Kennedy et al., 2016; WHO 2018). Subsequently, international midwifery researchers (from Northern Ireland, The Netherlands and Sweden) undertook a systematic review of midwives’ practice during the second stage of physiological labour, aiming to improve the quality of intrapartum care, inform education and future research.

Methods:

Systematic searches of PubMed, EMBASE.com, Cinahl, PsycINFO, Maternity and Infant Care and The Cochrane Library were undertaken initially from inception then, revised from January 2008 to May 2018. MeSH terms were mainly utilised with no language restrictions. Covidence software aided the researchers to comprehensively screen each study (two researchers per full text review). Reference lists were hand searched, data extraction undertaken, and following quality appraisal studies were included. The protocol was registered in the International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews (PROSPERO; Registration CRD42018088300).

Findings/Conclusion:

The review systematically collated pertinent literature by initially retrieving 10,510 hits. Following analysis and synthesis, findings revealed different midwifery practices relating to care during second stage of labour e.g. birth positions, pushing techniques and care of the perineum. By implementing this evidence, midwives can enable women during second stage of labour to optimise physiological processes to give birth. Notably however, there is a dearth of evidence relating to midwives’ practice which provides a positive experience for women during second stage of labour. This may reflect, that not all midwives’ practices are researched and documented. This systematic review undoubtedly contributes to formulating global midwifery practice, education and future research recommendations to support high quality intrapartum care for women during second stage of labour.
Key words

Physiological birth, midwifery care, midwives practice, second stage of labour