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Weight stigma in maternity care: Nurses and midwives attitudes toward overweight and obese during childbirth

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Statement of the problem: Obesity had become a global issue and a major public health concern, because of its impact on the public health. Obstetric and midwifery evidences reported that maternal obesity an important issue, because of its associated complications like: obstructed labors, infections and hemorrhage. People who are obese are often stigmatized and blamed for their weight. Nurses and midwives are not immune to obesity-related stigmatization and the literature features evidences of their negative attitudes towards obese patients. In Jordan, limited numbers of studies were conducted to investigate obesity-related issues. The purposes of this study were to assess nurses and midwives attitudes toward overweight and obese women during the childbirth in the North of Jordan, and to investigate the relationships between nurses and midwives selected socio-demographic characteristics and their attitudes.

Methodology: A descriptive, cross-sectional design was utilized. A convenient sample of 95 midwives and 30 nurses, who were working in the childbirth unit were recruited. A self-administered questionnaire consisted of three sections: demographical data, Arabic version of Fat Phobia Scale (FPS), and the Arabic version of Nurse's Attitudes toward Obesity and Obese Patients Scale (NATOOPS).

Findings: Majority Jordanian nurses and midwives held negative attitudes toward overweight and obese women during childbirth. Midwives held less negative attitudes than did nurse. The majority of participants were perceived the overweight and obese pregnant women during childbirth as overate people, shapeless, slow and unattractive. Age, speciality, education and years of experience were found to be associated with nurses and midwives attitudes.

Conclusion & Significance: Nurses and midwives negative attitudes toward overweight and obese pregnant women are a cause for concern. Therefore, maternal obesity was needed to be more adequately addressed in basic education courses, and in the continuing professional education classes of practicing nurses and midwives.

Biography

Salwa Obeisat Associate professor in the Maternal and Child Health Department at the Faculty of Nursing, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Jordan. She obtained her Doctorate in Nursing Science from the Catholic University of America in 1999. She was the Dean of Nursing at the Hashemite University in Jordan, between the years 2003-2006. She served as a temporary consultant for national and international organizations including WHO, Jordanian Nursing Council, and Higher Population Council. She is currently a member of several university committees, her research publications in the area of women's health, adolescence, and infertility.

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