



KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this paper is to describe the development of a conceptual model that helps to determine the characteristics of an optimal birth environment in relation to positive birth outcomes for women and infants. This model proposes that a safe and satisfying birth is dependent upon the level of stress experienced by the woman and the staff. This in turn influences their quality of communication, and this process is mediated by the design of the birth unit and the model of care provided.

The Relationship Between Birth Unit Design and Safe, Satisfying Birth: Developing a Hypothetical Model

Fourer, M., Davis, D., Fenwick, J., Leap, N., Iedema, R., Forbes, I., & Homer, C. E. S. 2010 | *Midwifery Volume 26, Pages 520-525*

Key Concepts/Context

The authors assert that just as the designed environment can impact health outcomes by disrupting effective communication and increasing patient and staff stress, it can also impact the experiences and outcomes for birthing women.

Methods

This is a discussion piece that focuses on the development of a conceptual model. It is not stated if the literature was gathered using a systematic review process.

Findings

The authors discuss the literature that supports the influence of design on contributing to a safe and satisfying birth experience and outcomes. They also discuss the relationship between the variables of design and communication, although they admit there is little research in this area. They created the model of care to encourage multidisciplinary research in this area.

Design Implications

Designers need to be aware of the impact that models of care can have on design decisions. This paper highlights the relationship that exists between the model of birthing care provided, women and staff stress, the communication efforts, and the birth unit design. Designers should consider how they can impact the communication and stress variables through design as well as provide an environment that supports the model of nursing care provided. This information is particularly useful for the programming phases of design.



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Limitations

This is a theory paper and as such has no definitive findings.