

Role of the Midwifery Trained Registered Nurse in Postnatal Units at Tertiary Care Hospitals in the Western Province of Sri Lanka: A Postal Survey

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Abstract : In Sri Lanka, postnatal care in the state hospitals is provided by different professional categories: Midwifery trained registered nurses (MTRNs), Registered Nurses (RNs) who do not have midwifery training, doctors and midwives. Even though four professional categories provide postnatal care to mothers and newborn babies, they are not aware of their own tasks and responsibilities in postnatal care. Particularly MTRN's role in the postnatal unit is unclear. The current study aimed to identify nurses' (both MTRN and RNs) perception on MTRN's tasks and responsibilities in postnatal care. This is a descriptive cross sectional study using postal survey. All nurses who were currently working in postnatal units at five selected tertiary care hospitals in the Western Province at that time were invited to participate in the study. Accordingly, the pre evaluated self-administered questionnaire was sent to 201 nurses (53 MTRNs and 148 RNs) in the study setting. The number of valid return questionnaire was 166; response rate was 83%. Respondents rated the responsibility of four professional categories: MTRN, RN, doctor and midwife whether they are 'primarily responsible', 'responsible in absence' and 'not responsible', for each of 15 postnatal (PN) tasks which were previously identified from focus group discussions with care providers during the first phase of the study. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 20; descriptive statistics were calculated. Out of the 15 PN tasks, 13 were identified as MTRNs' primary responsibilities by 71%-93% of respondents. The respondents also considered six (6) tasks out of 15 as primary responsibility of both MTRN and RN, seven (7) tasks as primary responsibility of MTRN, RN and doctor and the remaining two (2) tasks were identified as the primary responsibility of MTRN, RN and midwife. All 15 PN tasks overlapped with other professional categories. Overlapping tasks may create role confusion leading to conflicts among professional categories which affect the quality of care they provide, eventually, threaten the safety of the client. It is recommended that an official job description for each care provider is needed to recognize their own professional boundaries for ensuring safe, quality care delivery in Sri Lanka.

Keywords : overlapping, postnatal, responsibilities, tasks

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