

Transforming Maternity and Neonatal Services in a Middle Eastern Country

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Abstract : Since the establishment of midwifery, as a professional identity in its own right, in the early years of the 20th century, midwifery-led models of childbirth have prevailed in many parts of the world. However, in many locations midwives' scope of practice remains underdeveloped or absent. In Qatar, all births take place in hospital and are under the professional jurisdiction of obstetricians, predominately supported by internationally trained nurse-midwives and obstetric nurses. The strategic vision for health services in Qatar endorsed a desire to provide women with the 'Best Care Always' and the introduction of midwifery was seen as a way to achieve this. In 2015 the process of recruiting postgraduate educated Clinical Midwife Specialists from international sources began. The midwives were brought together to initiate an in hospital and community service transformation plan. This plan set out a series of wide-ranging actions to transform maternity and neonatal services to make care safer and give women more health choices. Change in any organization is a complex and dynamic process. This is made even more complex when multifaceted professional and cross cultural factors are involved. This presentation reports upon the motivations and challenges that exist and the progress around introducing a multicultural midwifery model of childbirth care in the state of Qatar. The paper examines and reflects upon the drivers and unique features of childbirth in the country. Despite accomplishments, progress still needs to be made in order to fully implement sustainable changes to further improve care and ensure women and neonates get the 'Best Care Always'. The progress within the transformation plan highlights how midwifery may coexist with competing models of maternity care to create an innovative, eclectic and culturally sensitive paradigm that can best serve women and neonatal health needs.

Keywords : culture, managing change, midwifery, neonatal, service transformation plan

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