

Letter To The Editor

Males Practicing Midwifery: Increasing Acceptance in Cultural and Religious Settings.

Dear Editor,

According to the International Confederation of Midwives (I.C.M.), a midwife is defined as having successfully completed a midwifery education programme that is based on those global standards for Midwifery Education (1). Midwifery is an ancient profession that has been practiced for centuries. It is an essential aspect of reproductive healthcare, especially during childbirth (2). Midwives provide emotional, physical, and medical support to expectant mothers, ensuring safe and healthy childbirth. Traditionally, midwifery has been considered a female profession, but recently, male midwives have become more common in many parts of the world (3). However, male midwives still face significant challenges, particularly in cultural and religious sensitive areas. This editorial explores ways to increase the acceptance of males practicing midwifery in cultural and religious sensitive areas.

Barriers of males practicing Midwifery

Following the inclusion of male into practice of midwifery, there have been numerous challenges including the following:

1. **Cultural Barriers:** Cultural beliefs play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards male midwives. In many cultures, childbirth is considered a female-only affair, and men are not allowed to be present during childbirth. Men practicing midwifery in these areas are seen as an intrusion of privacy and a violation of cultural norms. In some local communities, male midwives are prohibited from attending to women in labor. These beliefs make it challenging for males to practice midwifery, especially in communities where cultural beliefs are strictly adhered to.
2. **Religious Barriers:** Religious barriers are also a significant challenge facing males practicing midwifery. Some religious beliefs prohibit men from attending to female patients, especially during childbirth. For instance, in some conservative Muslim

societies, men are not allowed to enter the room where childbirth is taking place (4).

Similarly, some Christian sects believe that childbirth should be a female-only affair (5).

3. Lack of role models and mentors in the field: There are few male midwives in practice, and this can make it difficult for aspiring male midwives to find support and guidance (4).
4. Discrimination and harassment from both colleagues and patients at work.

Despite these challenges, some women believed that male midwives are patient and are very good in their work as compared to their female counterparts (4)

Strategies in promoting the acceptance of male midwives.

Due to the growing concern towards male midwives' practices, we believe that the following strategies could make people decipher the role of these professional and hence accept their services.

1. To overcome cultural barriers, it is essential to educate communities about the benefits of male midwifery. This can be achieved by involving traditional priest, community elders, and other influential people in the education process. Such education should highlight the need for male midwives and their positive contributions to maternal and child health. It is also important to emphasize the fact that male midwives do not interfere with the cultural practices of the communities they serve.
2. To overcome religious barriers, it is essential to involve religious leaders in the process of increasing acceptance of male midwives. This can be achieved by providing religious leaders with information about the benefits of male midwifery and how it aligns with the teachings of their religion. It is also essential to show religious leaders that male midwives do not compromise the religious values of the communities they serve.
3. Health care providers and organizations can encourage male midwives to take on leadership roles and provide opportunities for mentorship and training. Additionally, it is crucial to promote the positive experiences and successes of male midwives to encourage more men to join the profession.
4. Health care providers and policymakers need to promote a culture of inclusivity and respect in the workplace. Training programs can be designed to teach health care

providers about gender sensitivity and diversity, and policies can be put in place to prevent discrimination against male midwives.

Conclusion

Male midwives face significant challenges in cultural and religious sensitive areas. However, to increase the acceptance of male midwives in cultural and religious sensitive areas, education and awareness campaigns are essential. Midwifery associations, healthcare providers, and governments should collaborate to educate the public on the role of male midwives in reproductive healthcare. This education should focus on dispelling myths and misconceptions about male midwives and highlight their skills, experience, and qualifications. The education campaign should be tailored to specific communities and address their cultural and religious concerns. By increasing awareness and education, communities will be more accepting of male midwives and this will lead to better health outcomes for expectant mothers, improved gender equality, and a more diverse midwifery workforce.

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