

Research Directions

Office of Research Services

Clinical Judgements in Childbirth

Dr Jane Cioffi and Ms Fiona Arundell from the School of Nursing, along with Ms Julie Swain from Sydney West Area Health Service, are exploring ways to improve the efficacy of mid-wives decisions to suture injuries and trauma sustained during childbirth, through a Nurses and Midwives Board of NSW Research Scholarship grant.



‘During childbirth, many women incur significant perineal trauma’ says Dr Cioffi. ‘There is inconclusive evidence about the morbidity associated with this type of trauma and its repair, and decisions about suturing are of paramount importance to women’s safety and the quality of their care. Two stages in the decision making process have been identified and it is believed that certain situational cues and perceptions operate in the decision-making process. However, no specific cues or perceptual information involved in this process have been described.’

Currently, the decision to suture or not to suture trauma after childbirth is most often the responsibility of the midwife. Using in-depth interviews with midwives, Dr Cioffi and the team are gathering information and perceptions about the process of weighing alternatives in clinical judgements, and the various elements of knowledge that come into play when making decisions about suturing after childbirth. The findings will then be validated by an expert panel to illuminate key aspects of clinical decision-making for midwives.

The study will increase clinical knowledge in the domain of midwifery and provide inexperienced midwives and students with insight into the critical issues about making judgements to suture or not suture tears and trauma after childbirth. It will also improve decision-making for midwives minimising inappropriate intervention, alleviating unnecessary discomfort to women and increasing their safety and quality of care.

Project Title: Optimising decision making for perineal and associated trauma: Improving midwives’ clinical judgements for suturing

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