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Coping and Help in Birth: An investigation into 'normal' childbirth as described by new mothers and their attending midwives

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Title.

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Abstract

Objective: to investigate how ‘normal’ childbirth is described by new mothers and their attending midwives.

Design: a qualitative, reflexive, narrative study was used to explore birth stories using in-depth, un-structured interviews.

Setting: 21 new mothers and their 16 attending midwives were recruited from the locality surrounding a district general hospital in South Wales, United Kingdom (UK).

Findings: the findings identified that the mothers wanted to cope with labour and birth, by breathing through it and using some birth interventions with the help of knowledgeable midwives. Midwives aimed to achieve ‘normality’ in birth but also commonly utilised birth interventions. Consequently the notion of ‘normal’ birth as not involving interventions in birth was not found to be a useful defining concept in this study. Furthermore, current dichotomous models and theories of birth and midwifery in particular those relating to pain management did not fully explain the perspectives of these women and their midwives.

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