

Public Health Nursing practice and outcomes for vulnerable perinatal women: An integrative literature review

Why an integrative literature review?

- An integrative literature review allows for the review, critique, and synthesis of literature in an integrated fashion (Torraco, 2005)
- It accepts the inclusion of diverse research methodologies in order to offer a more comprehensive perspective (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

The focus of this review...

What difference do public health nurses make in health outcomes for priority perinatal women in relation to

- breastfeeding initiation and duration
- infant immunizations
- reduced maternal tobacco use

Each of these three outcomes has been found to affect the health of individuals and populations.

What is the priority perinatal population?

Women in the perinatal period and up to two years postpartum whose health, and that of their infants, may be negatively affected by biological and social determinants of health, such as age, socio-economic status, and education levels, and for whom public health nursing services are prioritized.

These women are less likely to initiate breastfeeding, and when they do breastfeed, are likely to breastfeed for shorter periods.

This same population of women has been found to have higher rates of smoking and lower rates of infant immunizations.

Do PHNs make a difference?

- ✦ Evidence has shown that PHN involvement with these women and their families can make a positive difference in breastfeeding initiation and duration rates, tobacco reduction, and infant immunizations.

However...

What is not well understood is how PHNs are able to support these women in the real life context of everyday practice.

- ✦ Some trials focused only women having their first baby, or on adolescent mothers, or both, but few incorporated the wide range of perinatal clients that PHNs encounter in day-to-day practice.
- ✦ Many research protocols restricted the range of other influences that affect routine PHN practice, by providing nurses with limited and smaller caseloads, more intense supervision, and additional training.
- ✦ There was no mention of community and systems level activities, in which PHNs engage on an ongoing basis.

Analysis revealed several themes

1. Organizational influences:

- ✦ In day-to-day practice, PHN work is influenced by many organizational factors, such as leadership, budgets, staffing levels, and competing priorities that affect the ability of PHNs to deliver service to priority perinatal women.
- ✦ The nature of the population served by PHNs is also directed by the organization, and often includes a much wider range of priority perinatal women than those identified in many of the studies reviewed.

2. Trusting relationships

- ✦ The continuing involvement that PHNs have with priority perinatal women and their families over months, and sometimes years, provides an ongoing opportunity for the development of trusting relationships that can influence health outcomes.

What women say...

- ✦ Women identified the importance of the nurse's personality, friendship, respect, expertise, and trustworthiness (Kurtz Landy, Jack, Wahoush, Sheehan, and MacMillan, 2012).
- ✦ Key findings from another qualitative study of 42 low-income mothers identified the importance of health care providers who were helpful, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic about breastfeeding, made home visits, established supportive relationships, made appropriate referrals, and helped with actual breastfeeding problems throughout the perinatal period (Raisler, 2000).

3. Levels of intervention

- ✦ The real life practice of PHNs often includes a much broader range practice that involves community and systems level activities, such as the establishment of WHO's Baby-Friendly protocols, or school district-wide tobacco prevention programs.
- ✦ Community and systems level PHN interventions are important because of the significance of community influences, such as those noted by Matone, et al. (2012) in relation to smoking, or Renfrew et al. (2012) regarding breastfeeding.

All levels are important

The focus on individuals, as well as communities and systems means that PHNs engage in activities that support the broader population of women and families, building resources that become ongoing supports in the community, and which can assist in changing local culture.



PHNs do make a difference!

- ✦ The literature reviewed in this chapter has demonstrated that PHNs can make a positive difference in initiation and duration of breastfeeding, infant immunization rates, and in maternal tobacco reduction and cessation for priority perinatal women.
- ✦ However, in order to support effective service delivery and program planning, further research is needed to explore the effects of routine, day-to-day PHN practice at multiple levels of intervention, as it is affected by organizational influences.

Why this is important for nursing ?

- ✓ To improve our services
- ✓ To make informed decisions
- ✓ To make the best use of limited resources
- ✓ To be accountable for the services provided
- ✓ To know what works and what doesn't work

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References:

- ✦ For a complete listing of all the references included in this literature review, please contact me:

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