

The Concept of Nursing in Abortion Provision, and how Nurses Felt About the Abortion Limit and Viability

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Abstract

Aim

This paper is a report of a study of the perceptions of nurses who work in abortion services.

Background

International debate surrounds abortion. In England and Wales, the Abortion Act which was introduced in 1967 recently came under public review in relation to its legal limit of 24 weeks gestation. The review did not extend to those working within abortion services, and these nurses' views remained unknown. Investigating the perceptions of nurses who work in abortion services adds a dimension to the debate from a professional perspective which has hitherto been absent.

Methods

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted in 2007 with nine nurses working in three different abortion clinics in the United Kingdom. NVivo was used to manage the interview data and thematic analysis identified patterns of nursing concepts and attitudes.

Findings

Two global themes of 'Attitudes Towards' and 'Coping With' abortion were identified. Six organisational themes detailed these: 'society', 'nurses' and 'reasoning' in 'Attitudes Towards' and 'role', 'clients' and 'late gestation abortion' in 'Coping With'. Eleven basic themes further described the organisational themes. Kim's theory of Human Living was used to clarify and provide a rationale for the nursing approach to care in this setting.

Conclusion

This ability of participants to care for their clients as individuals illustrates the nature of empowerment of the nurses to attain the goals of the client. Making this support explicit through defined roles for nurses would potentially enable nurses in abortion services to perform their role more effectively at all gestation times.