

2015

Care in Birth Centers vs. Hospitals: Which is better?

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Recommended Citation

Shank, M., & Ryder, G. (2015). Care in Birth Centers vs. Hospitals: Which is better?. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/nurs_stuwork/32

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Melissa Shank and Gemma Ryder

What We Learned

Birth center care delivers more positive maternal outcomes than standard care within the hospital due to less medical interventions and postpartum complications.

Background

Both birth centers and hospital wards are common settings for birth, which lead to unique maternal outcomes and complications.

Purpose & Aims

To investigate the differences in interventions and maternal outcomes based on standard care in a hospital or in a birth center setting.

Sample

- **Low-risk pregnant women** studied in hospitals and birth centers
 - Carrying one child at full gestation, vertex position, less than 40 years old, BMI less than 30, no previous c/sec, no history of smoking, HTN, or diabetes, no antepartum complications.

Methods

- Database search - CINAHL
- Published 2011-2015
- Majority written by nurses
- Four research studies were evaluated to compose a synthesis of common results.

Results



- **Birth centers use fewer interventions during labor**
 - Significantly fewer C-sections
 - Decreased assisted vaginal deliveries
 - Less use of epidural analgesia
- **Birth centers have equal or improved maternal outcomes**
 - No difference in postpartum hemorrhage
 - Fewer anal sphincter tears
 - Lower incidence of urinary retention

Discussion

- Fewer medical interventions in the birthing process leads to improved maternal outcomes.
- In standard care, visualization of medical equipment and interventions promotes their use, leading to unnecessary interventions.
- Birth center care promotes the natural process of childbirth with as good or improved maternal outcomes when compared to standard care in a hospital.

Next Steps

- Explore more research studies
 - Expand on findings
 - Include more birth centers
- Provide research to expecting parents
 - Interventions and maternal outcomes

Limitations

- Findings are limited to four research studies.
- Each study focuses on different variables.
- Results may not be applicable to all healthcare settings.

Acknowledgments

We thank Dr. Monturo and West Chester University.