



Neurodivergent Student Midwives' needs in Clinical Practice: A Scoping Review Protocol.

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Abstract

This review explored experiences of neurodivergent student midwives, with focus on clinical placement. It examined challenges, as well as recommendations to improve experience and inclusion. With no current structured pathway for adjustments to support neurodivergent students in the clinical area, identification of needs and improvements aims to support professional development for students to thrive in the future of the midwifery workforce.

The aim was to conduct a review of the available support and needs of neurodivergent student midwives in practice placements.

Objectives:

- To explore what neurodivergent student midwives' needs are in clinical practice.
- To review challenges for met by students and staff in clinical practice in supporting neurodiverse students.
- To explore healthcare professionals/midwives' experiences- in supporting students with neurodivergence, in the clinical setting.
- To identify adjustments already in place in clinical practice, and are these appropriate, useful and supportive.
- To explore how useful are educational adjustments in relation to transferability to clinical placement.
- To provide evidence of the areas where further research is needed to pose primary research to expand the knowledge base pertaining to neurodivergent student midwives in clinical practice.

The Method included the utilisation of the SPIDER (Sample, Phenomena of Interest, Design, Evaluation, Research) search tool to guide the development of the research question and search terms. Eight databases relevant to healthcare literature (Medline EbSCO, CINAHL, Embase Ovid, PsycINFO and Maternity and Infant Care) were consulted after expanding keywords and search criteria due to limited available primary research. Following selection of relevant literature, the methodological quality of the chosen articles was appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) framework.

Consultation of the findings highlighted areas of positive, challenges and recommendations that emerged, with individual findings for each section. Results were then categorised by themes, where overlapping results emerged. Themes of challenges centred around: environment, structure and

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organisational support, personal and professional development and preparation and support for effective clinical practice. Themes overwhelmingly, in the challenges and recommendations for staff and students were amongst support, yet experiences of support varied greatly.

This scoping literature review concludes the need for further research to be conducted, which is up to date, explores a variety of neurotypes and is relevant to the current structures in midwifery education. Identified challenges and needs showed a requirement for non-specific accommodations in practice, yet any adjustments desired showed a need for heightened support for both staff and students for this to take place. To enable this, training for students and staff is required to educate the current and future workforce in neurodiversity and inclusive practices in the clinical environments.

Keywords

neurodivergence, student midwives, clinical placements, reasonable adjustments, inclusive practice