



OBSTACLES AND ENABLERS TO THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLED BIRTH ATTENDANTS: A CASE STUDY OF THE SHOKLO MALARIA RESEARCH UNIT ON THE THAILAND-MYANMAR BORDER

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The use of Skilled Birth Attendants in the provision of safe and appropriate maternity care represents an excellent example of an efficacious use of task shifting to develop a cost-effective model of care. This case study explores the optimal conditions for SBA workforce sustainability, which could be transferable to the midwifery workforce in Canada.

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PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES

This study aims to conduct a multi-level analysis of obstacles and enablers to professional development amongst Skilled Birth Attendants (SBA) working for SMRU in order to identify means by which to empower lower level SBAs, support their professional development, and create a more sustainable maternity workforce.

FINDINGS/IMPACT/OUTCOMES

This case study provides an example of a SBA workforce that has been provided with appropriate midwifery skills to fulfill a limited scope of practice, and is now ready and eager to gain complementary skills in order to better meet the needs of its patient population. The SBAs at both sites demonstrated exemplary teamwork, which serves as a strong motivational factor in addition to their desire to help their community. Conversely, the SBAs demonstrated a considerable aversion to negative feedback; complicating the performance management process. Although most SBAs find comfort in the hierarchical decision-making structure that has SMRU has established, this structure may perpetuate the SBAs' stated lack of decision-making confidence, rather than encourage them to develop the ownership, leadership, and analytical skills that are required in order to achieve higher levels of accreditation. Furthermore, SMRU is currently facing wider recruitment and retention issues, which create recurrent disruptions in the workflow of its birthing units.

CONCLUSIONS

Achieving workforce sustainability will require a balance of appropriate and constructive consultation with obstetricians without perpetuating dependence. In the case of SMRU, persistent recruitment and retention concerns reveal that workforce sustainability cannot be achieved through professional development alone.