

Challenges of using the partograph in Kenyan labour wards

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Abstract:

Background: Previous research has demonstrated the likely benefits of partograph use in low-resourced settings. However, the challenges of completing a partograph are also reported. The objective of this study was to examine students' views and experiences of partograph use to gain understanding of the realities of using this tool in the labour ward. **Methods:** In a qualitative study, 51 student nurses, undertaking their maternity placement at a university in Nairobi, Kenya, participated in five focus group discussions. Data were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically. **Results:** Four main themes emerged from the analyses: challenges to 'doing the right thing'; theory-practice disconnectedness; negative role models; and retrospective recording. **Conclusions:** The results provide insight into the challenges faced by students when practising in the labour ward environment. A more effective approach to partograph training and implementation should be adopted to support students. However, student midwife training is unlikely to be implemented into practice unless the qualified team supports their learning. Given that the partograph had little status in the labour ward, change may only happen when senior health professionals (midwives and obstetricians) lead by example. Further research is required to explore the views of obstetricians and qualified midwives on partograph use. Appropriate implementation strategies also warrant further investigation