

Midwifery students' perspectives of an interprofessional simulation day of family and domestic violence with Social Work students

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In a clinical situation midwives may encounter episodes of family and domestic violence (FDV). These can be difficult to manage and also necessitate referral to a social worker. Student midwives rarely have the opportunity to engage in this type of situation and may feel underprepared. An interprofessional day was held, aimed to expose student midwives and student social workers to a simulated learning experience, with standardised patients in a safe environment. The use of simulated patients (actors) increased the fidelity to provide an environment that replicated a hospital experience. The scenarios were developed with learning objectives: to 1) Increase awareness of the incidence of FDV in the hospital setting. 2) Understand the roles of social work and midwifery when working with people experiencing FDV. 3) Understand the application of the FDV screen. 4) Understand the format, use and application of a social work risk assessment. 5) Develop interprofessional communication skills. 6) Reflect upon processes used to make decisions in the context of FDV. The participants took part in three scenarios, with 4 students per scenario, who were rotated through simulation activities, being an active participant and an observer throughout the day. Debriefing occurred at the end of each scenario. Initial evaluation was conducted on the day of the activity. Students were provided the option to respond to a survey questionnaire, with both quantitative and qualitative questions using a five point Likert Scale. A focus group offered the opportunity for eight student midwives to discuss the simulation activities the following week. This was with open ended questions prompting greater discussion. The overall findings suggest that student midwives felt exposed, shocked and upset when confronted with a scene of FDV. They felt it was challenging to control their personal feelings and maintain a professional exterior. The student midwives valued the interprofessional experience and found it useful to discover the role of the social worker after referral had taken place and to learn what support services were available for women. Overall they valued learning about the importance of the midwife's role in diffusing the situation as the escalating scenarios unfolded and of supporting the woman and making appropriate referral to the social worker.