

## Calling the Midwife in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Qualitative Analysis of Women's Desires in the Provider-Patient Relationship During Perinatal Care

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**Introduction.** Midwifery care is on the rise. From 2003 to 2018, midwife-assisted deliveries in the United States increased 11.83%, while physician-assisted hospital births witnessed a 9.73% decrease. It is evident that women perceive benefits in the midwife-mother relationship. This project addressed the questions: During perinatal care, what is the desired role of a woman's midwife in the midwife-mother relationship? How do midwives fulfill this role according to patient desires?

**Methods.** Interviews were conducted with fifteen women who chose midwifery care at the University of Kansas Hospital. Data was analyzed in the context of a study entitled, "Four Models of the Physician-Patient Relationship".

**Results.** The midwife's role aligned with the "Interpretive" model because she acted as a counselor, capable of interpreting patient desires. Patient desires had a compounding effect. Once foundational desires were met, further desires could be addressed. Foundational desires included slow-paced appointments, respect for patient values, and an options-based approach to decision-making. These desires, once fulfilled, culminated in a relationship that was personal, flexible, and trusting.

**Conclusions.** Trust was a reciprocal value in the midwife-mother relationship. Midwives expressed trust in mothers by viewing birth as an un-hurried, physiologic process. In return, mothers trusted midwives who supported their autonomy and built a personal relationship. This was apparent in the delivery room, where patients adopted a flexible approach to labor plans because they trusted their midwife to accurately interpret patient values. As midwifery grows in popularity, these findings contribute to an understanding of women's desires when choosing a perinatal care provider.