

## Needs of Continuing Midwifery Education and Implementation of Educational Programs from the Viewpoint of Midwives in Lorestan Province

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**Abstract: Background:** The slogan of the World Health Organization, "Today's world needs midwives more than ever," indicates the importance of the role of midwives in the community. The optimum fulfillment of this supportive and therapeutic role requires midwives' awareness of the professional necessities. Continuing education programs result in the enhancement of the obstetric education and services. The importance of continuing education lies in the enhancement of midwives' role in health care system and the promotion of quality of obstetric services. Therefore, the present study was conducted to investigate the needs of continuing midwifery education, and the way of implementing the educational programs from the viewpoint of the midwives working in the cities of Lorestan province, Iran. **Materials and Methods:** This descriptive cross-sectional study included 300 midwives who were working in 22 cities in the province. The subjects were selected through the census sampling. A 3-part questionnaire with approved reliability and validity was applied as the data collection tool. The first part of the questionnaire was related to the demographic information, the second part to the specialized titles of continuing education (78 titles, according to a 5-point Likert scale), and the third part to the way of implementing the educational programs. The data were collected in one stage and through a self-administered method, and were analyzed using the SPSS software, version 15, via descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and chi-square test. **Results:** The mean age was 32.72±6.1 years, and 33.3% of the midwives were working in the city of Khorramabad. Moreover, 38.3% were working in maternity hospitals and 43.7% in health care centers. The title of "blood pressure disorders in pregnancy and childbirth" had the highest priority (83.08±24.06) among all the recommended titles of continuing midwifery education, and holding workshops was the best method of continuing education (35.5%) from the viewpoint of the midwives. Significant differences were between the midwives working in maternity hospitals and those in the other places in terms of the importance of the topics of "mother-and-child health and family planning" and "gynecologic diseases" (P=0.006 and P=0.001 respectively). A significant relationship was found between working experience and duration of educational programs (P=0.01). **Discussion:** The results showed the importance of the topic of "obstetrics complications in pregnancy and childbirth", particularly the title of "blood pressure disorders in pregnancy and childbirth". Therefore, it is essential to include it in continuing midwifery education programs. The subjects were more inclined to the traditional methods of continuing education, whereas newer methods, including the Internet, can be effective as well. It is recommended that midwives be familiar with various educational methods in order to apply all educational resources favorably.

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### Introduction

The slogan of the World Health Organization, "Today's world needs midwives more than ever," indicates the importance of the role of midwives in the community, and the optimum fulfillment of this supportive and therapeutic role requires midwives' awareness of professional necessities and patients' needs(1). Good educational quality prepares midwives for assuming multiple roles and responsibilities, and well-educated midwives can skillfully manage resources and make necessary

changes in the methods of providing the services that are essential for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (2).

Continuing education has been recently emphasized particularly in medical fields, so that insufficient information in health care providers can cause numerous damages in themselves and the people who receive their services (3). Assessment and prioritization of educational needs is the first step in planning. The results of a study conducted in Ahwaz University of Medical Sciences in 2004, which investigated 300 GPs' viewpoint of their

educational priorities and the compliance of their viewpoint with their current educational programs, showed that the GPs reported the most important educational needs in the internal diseases (mean=2.05 out of 3) and the least important in the infectious diseases (mean=1.75 out of 3). Also, the longest time of continuing education had been allotted to pediatric diseases with an average of 35.63 hours, and the shortest to eye diseases with an average of 31.0 hours (4). Continuing education programs result in the enhancement of obstetric education and services. Running continuing education courses and compiling appropriate short- and long-term programs in various occupational areas can enhance the status and role of midwives in health care system, and promote the quality of obstetric services (1).

Despite the development of these kinds of educational programs in many countries worldwide, no effective measures have been taken to run these programs in our country, Iran (5).

Compiled continuing education programs vary in the methods of presentation. They can include educational and research activities such as seminars and congresses, self-learning such as reading research journals, training, and practice of educational units (6). Given the rapid changes happening in educational information and methods worldwide, continuing midwifery education is vital in order to update midwives' awareness. The Iranian Parliament passed the Professional Continuing Midwifery Education Program after it passed the Continuing Medical Education Program in 1996. Planning to implement these educational programs based on the conditions and professional needs of midwives in our country seems to be necessary. Therefore, the present study was conducted to investigate the needs of continuing midwifery education, and the way of implementing the educational programs from the viewpoint of the midwives working in the cities of Lorestan province, Iran, in 2012.

## Materials and Methods

This descriptive cross-sectional study included 300 midwives who were working in 22 cities in Lorestan province, Iran, based on the areas covered by the health care centers. The subjects were selected through the census sampling.

A 3-part questionnaire with approved reliability and validity was applied as the data collection tool. The validity of the questionnaire was approved via the content validity and based on the comments of some faculty members, and the reliability was confirmed via the test-retest reliability. The questionnaire was given to all the midwives working in maternity hospitals, health care centers, private clinics, faculties, and offices. The first part of

the questionnaire was related to the demographic information, and included 16 open and closed questions. The second part was related to the specialized titles of continuing education, and included 78 closed questions a 5-point Likert scale in 4 topics of "obstetric complications of pregnancy and childbirth", "mother-and-child health and family planning", "gynecologic diseases", and "other titles". The third part consisted of 12 open and closed questions regarding the way of implementing the educational programs from the viewpoint of the subjects. The data were collected in one stage and through a self-administered method, and were analyzed using the SPSS software, version 15, via descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and chi-square test.

## Results

The mean age of the subjects was  $32.72 \pm 6.1$  years, 61.3% were married, and 39.5% had tenured employment. Bachelor degree holders had the highest frequency (51.3%), and 72% of the subjects were the graduates of state universities. The mean working experience was  $7.7 \pm 6.13$  years, and the mean length of time from graduation was  $8.55 \pm 5.53$  years.

Most (33.3%) of the midwives were working in the city of Khorramabad, and the lowest number (1.3%) in Sepiddast. In terms of place of working, 38.3% were working in maternity hospitals, 43.7% in health care centers, 7% in offices, 3% in universities, and 8% in private clinics.

Out of the subjects working in maternity hospitals, 69.7% were working in the maternity hospitals of Lorestan University of Medical Sciences, 20.5% in the maternity hospitals of Social Security Organization, and 9.8% in private maternity hospitals. Furthermore, 74% of the subjects had no history of administrative responsibilities.

In terms of working shift, the midwives working in the morning shift had the highest frequency (57.6%). The most frequent complications that the midwives had encountered in their patients were blood pressure disorders in pregnancy and childbirth (37.1%), bleeding in pregnancy and childbirth (25.5%), urinary tract infections (18.7%), prolonged pregnancy (11.1%), and abnormal uterine bleeding (7.6%). In addition, 78.6% of the subjects believed that the implementation of continuing midwifery education programs was very necessary.

Among the 10 titles of the topic of "obstetric complications in delivery and childbirth", the title of "blood pressure disorders in pregnancy and childbirth" had the highest priority and importance with a mean of  $83.08 \pm 24.06$  from the viewpoint of the midwives (Table 1).

The results also revealed that, among the titles of the topic of "mother-and-child health and family

planning", the title of "health of postpartum care and breastfeeding" had the highest priority with a mean of  $66.83 \pm 28.33$  (Table 2). Among the titles of the topic of "gynecologic diseases", the title of "abnormal uterine bleeding" had the highest priority with a mean

of  $76.58 \pm 23.03$  (Table 3). Also, the title of "regulatory and legal aspects of midwifery" had the highest priority among the other titles with a mean of  $75.91 \pm 25.23$  (Table 4).

**Table 1.** Mean and standard deviation of 10 important titles of the topic of "obstetric complications in pregnancy and childbirth" in continuing midwifery education program from the viewpoint of midwives working in Loretan province in terms of priority.

Title	Mean $\pm$ SD
Blood pressure disorders in pregnancy and childbirth	$83.08 \pm 24.6$
Diabetes in pregnancy and childbirth	$80.08 \pm 23.15$
Medication use in pregnancy and childbirth	$80.03 \pm 23.69$
Infectious and sexually transmitted diseases in pregnancy	$78.33 \pm 22.24$
Cardiovascular diseases in pregnancy and childbirth	$78.00 \pm 22.66$
Bleeding in the second half of pregnancy	$77.75 \pm 22.86$
Urinary tract infections in pregnancy	$77.50 \pm 22.44$
Obstetric emergencies	$77.33 \pm 26.71$
Bleeding in the first half of pregnancy	$77.16 \pm 26.88$
Puerperium complications (bleeding, infection, etc.)	$77.00 \pm 26.02$

**Table 2.** Mean and standard deviation of 5 important titles of the topic of "mother-and-child health and family planning" in continuing midwifery education program from the viewpoint of midwives working in Loretan province in terms of priority

Title	Mean $\pm$ SD
Health of postpartum care and breastfeeding	$66.83 \pm 28.33$
Mental and social health of the pregnant woman	$64.08 \pm 27.04$
Physical health of the infant and child	$64.03 \pm 25.61$
Physical health of the pregnant woman	$63.50 \pm 26.36$
Health care during delivery	$63.00 \pm 28.73$

**Table 3.** Mean and standard deviation of 5 important titles of the topic of "gynecologic diseases" in continuing midwifery education program from the viewpoint of midwives working in Loretan province in terms of priority

Title	Mean $\pm$ SD
Abnormal uterine bleeding (AUB, DUB )	$76.58 \pm 23.03$
Benign and malignant breast diseases	$75.58 \pm 24.22$
Diagnostic methods of breast diseases	$75.41 \pm 23.79$
Diagnostic methods of gynecologic diseases	$74.16 \pm 25.27$
Infertility in women and men	$73.58 \pm 25.04$

**Table 4.** Mean and standard deviation of 5 other important titles in continuing midwifery education program from the viewpoint of midwives working in Loretan province in terms of priority.

Title	Mean $\pm$ SD
Regulatory and legal aspects of midwifery	$75.91 \pm 25.23$
Specialized language	$74.58 \pm 25.81$
Religious orders of women and midwifery	$73.41 \pm 25.03$
Research methodology	$64.75 \pm 28.05$
Holistic midwifery	$59.08 \pm 26.71$

Regarding the way of implementation of continuing education programs, 35.3% of the subjects suggested holding educational workshops, 25% using films and CDs, and 11% reading educational

journals, books, and pamphlets. Concerning the content of continuing education programs, 53% of the subjects suggested the novelty of educational materials, 18% applicability, 8% reviewing basic

information, and 21% mentioned all these characteristics as equally important in preparing education contents. Moreover, 19.3% of the subjects suggested 3-month intervals for the implementation of continuing education programs, 73% reported mornings as appropriate, 52% believed that they had to be informed of the programs at least one month before their implementation, and 90.3% suggested that participating in continuing education programs be considered as a working shift. With regard to duration of continuing education program, 51% suggested 4 to 6 hours, 69% considered the programs as necessary for midwives regardless of working experience, and 73% of the subjects stressed the necessity of taking a final educational test to receive the certification.

In this study, analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed a significant difference between the mothers working in maternity hospitals and those working in the other wards in terms of the means of importance of the topics of "mother-and-child health and family planning" and "gynecologic diseases" ( $P=0.006$  and  $P=0.001$  respectively). This means that the midwives in maternity hospitals considered these topics more important compared with the midwives working in the other places. Furthermore, ANOVA showed a significant difference between the mothers working in health care centers and those working in the other wards in terms of the means of importance of the topic of "obstetric complications in pregnancy and childbirth" ( $P=0.001$ ), so that the midwives in health care centers considered more importance for this topic compared with the midwives working in the other places. In our study, the chi-square test showed a significant relationship between working experience and duration of educational programs ( $P=0.01$ ), showing that the midwives with working experience longer than 15 years (10.9%) were less inclined to participate in educational programs longer than 9 hours compared with the midwives with working experience less than 5 years (17.5%).

## Discussion

The results of this study showed that the topic of "obstetric complications in pregnancy and childbirth" was considered as more important than the other topics from the viewpoint of the subjects, and the title of "blood pressure disorders in pregnancy and childbirth" was considered as the most important title among all the titles of this topic. Given that the most common complication reported by the subjects was blood pressure disorders in pregnancy and childbirth, this viewpoint of the subjects in his regard seems to be reasonable. In a study conducted on continuing education of gynecologists in Brazil in 2005, the most wrong answers given by 250 subjects

were about blood pressure in pregnancy and prevention of preeclampsia (7). In another study on the needs of educational programs for GPs graduated from 16 Canadian universities in 2006, a large gap was found between the importance of the issue of complications of pregnancy and childbirth and the preparation of the subjects (8).

The results of our study indicated that most of the subjects considered continuing midwifery education programs as essential, while the results of a study conducted on nurses' viewpoint on continuing education programs in Kermanshah, Iran, in 2004 showed that 31% of the subjects considered continuing nursing education as very important (9).

Holding workshops, followed by self-study, was reported as the most appropriate method of continuing education in our study. In a study conducted on the effect of holding workshops as an educational method on the function of family physicians in 2002, holding workshops was reported as an efficient method in preventive practices (10). However, in a study in 2001 on the educational needs of general surgeons in continuing education programs in Tehran University of Medical Sciences, giving a lecture accompanied by questions and answers was reported as the most appropriate method by 57.3% of the subjects (11). In a study conducted on general dentists' perception of continuing education in the cities of Kerman and Rafsanjan in Iran, the 145 subjects considered holding workshops, giving a lecture accompanied by showing films, and reading books as the most appropriate methods of the implementation of continuing education programs (12). However, a study conducted on the effectiveness of e-learning on continuing medical education for physicians in 2008 showed no significant difference between the effectiveness of e-learning and the traditional methods in the field of mental health (13).

Our study showed that most of the subjects reported the novelty of the content of educational programs as necessary. In a study in 2005 on GPs' perception of the condition and motivation of participants in educational programs, the aim of 28% of the subjects was to consolidate their previous information and to gain new information (14). In two studies performed on the educational needs of GPs in 2003 and of urology residents in 1997, novelty was reported as the first priority regarding the content of educational programs requested by the subjects (11, 15).

According to the results of our study, most of the subjects believed that a maximum duration of 6 hours was appropriate for continuing education programs. In a study that compared 5-point and 25-point continuing education programs for GPs in

2004, 76.9% of the subjects preferred 1-day programs (16). Most of the subjects in our study preferred the morning shift for the implementation of educational programs, and believed that participants had to be informed at least one month before implementing the programs. In a study conducted on nurses' viewpoint of continuing education in 2004, working shift and unawareness of the time and place of programs were among the barriers to implementing the programs (9).

In our study, a significant relationship was found between working place (maternity hospitals, health centers, etc.) and the importance of the titles of the educational programs. The results of a study in 2000, which assessed the educational needs of physicians, showed that most of the 95 participants believed that they had had poor training and education during their internship. Although they had developed some skills and experiences during the years of working, they believed that they did not have all the necessary skills (17).

In the present study, a significant relationship was found between working experience and duration of educational programs, showing that willingness to participate in programs longer than 6 hours decreased with an increase in working experience.

In a study on the educational needs of surgeons in 2003, the mean working experience was  $24 \pm 11.9$  years, and 61.5% of the subjects believed in a maximum duration of 3 days and 4 hours a day (11). In a study investigating the intervening factors of burnout in Danish GPs in 2004, 25% of the doctors were suffering from burnout. The results also showed that not being a member of continuing education groups could possibly increase the burnout related to participating in the programs twice. Moreover, the ratio of burnout in the physicians who had not been trained via easy educational methods was 7 times higher (18).

In summary, the results of our study indicated the importance of the titles related to the topic of "obstetric complications in pregnancy and childbirth", particularly the title of "blood pressure disorders in pregnancy and childbirth". Since blood pressure disorders are serious, pay attention to them in continuing midwifery education seems to be essential. Moreover, our results showed that the subjects were more inclined to the traditional methods of continuing education, while the application of newer methods, such as the Internet, can be effective as well. Therefore, it is recommended that various studies be conducted on the effectiveness of diverse educational methods in order to apply all educational resources favorably.

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