

“IT’S BUSYBUT I LOVE IT”

THE EXPERIENCE OF NURSES PROVIDING ABORTION CARE IN A
SPECIALIST SETTING

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of a Master of Nursing Science (Community Health &
Primary Care)

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Declaration of originality

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or tertiary institution , and to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Brigid Coombe

13/1/14

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Abstract

Aim

This is a report of a study to understand the subjective experience of nurses whose role it is to provide nursing care for women seeking abortion services in a specialist clinic.

Background

Abortion is a very commonly provided health service in Australia but remains morally and politically controversial and associated with judgment and stigma. Nurses are integral to the provision of abortion services for women. Research attention to the subjective experience of nurses providing abortion care in specialist abortion services has been limited, particularly in Australia.

Methods

A qualitative research design, informed by feminist research principles was developed to explore the experience of nurses caring for women in a gendered and marginalised area of health care. A small sample of nurses, working in a specialist clinic in SA, participated in an in depth interview with the researcher, and a workshop to validate initial thematic data analysis.

Results

Nurses choose to work in a specialist abortion clinic for a range of reasons. A commitment to self-determination in health care decision-making facilitates the nurses' work in the contested environment of abortion. Four themes emerged from the data analysis. The participants' experience was revealed, through their voices, in the themes of: *with woman, finding balance, relating with care and intention and silences*.

Conclusion

Providing abortion care for women in a specialist setting is a rewarding and challenging experience for nurses. Doing important work that directly helps women is rewarding for nurses who have a wide scope of practice with organisational and team supports.

This study confirms the findings of other research of the importance of supportive frameworks for nurses working in abortion care.

Future research to develop supervisory and reflective frameworks should include the development of appropriate language to discuss the difficult aspects of work in the second trimester.

Decriminalisation of abortion laws would enable nurses to provide woman centred care based on clinical guidelines, taking account of the complexities of women's lives and responsibilities.