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Experiences of healthcare professionals on pregnancy terminations due to fetal anomaly: a phenomenological study

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Context

Special health care needs of women and family who have a difficult process after pregnancy termination due to fetal anomaly should be handled by health professionals. However, healthcare professional who will provide care after perinatal loss may also be affected, and emotional impact may be reflected in health care.

Objective

It is aimed to determine the opinions and experiences of the healthcare professionals working in the field of women's health regarding pregnancy terminations due to fetal anomaly with this study.

Methods

This qualitative study is based on a phenomenological approach. The study was conducted in Antalya, Turkey between December 2018 and April 2019. The sample of the study consisted of 26 participants including nurses, midwives, specialists, and assistant doctors who have encountered pregnancy termination process due to fetal anomaly at least once. The study data were collected via an individual in-depth interview technique using a semi-structured survey form. Then, content analysis was made over the data transcribed.

Main outcome measures

The main outcome measures of the study are to reveal the perceptions and attitudes of health professionals about pregnancy terminations and to determine whether there is a difference in approach to pregnancy terminations among health professionals from different disciplines.

Results

After qualitative analysis, the study data were handled under two themes as "1-How are healthcare professionals affected during the termination process?" and "2-what do healthcare professionals do in the termination process?". Under these two themes, the difficulties and facilitating factors in the pregnancy termination process for health professionals were revealed; In addition, the approaches of health professionals to pregnancy terminations were determined. It has been concluded that doctors have a more mechanical approach to pregnancy terminations, while nurses and midwives have a more emotional and compassionate approach.

Conclusions

It was determined that healthcare professionals involved in the termination of pregnancy due to fetal anomaly were affected in different ways in the process and there were some variables that determine this effect. To facilitate the process, it can be suggested to strengthen health professionals by improving editable factors.