

BACKGROUND

Doula-partnered care is associated with:

- Improved perinatal outcomes
- Lower rates of cesarean delivery and preterm birth
- Improved patient experiences
- Improved continuity of support during pregnancy, labor, and postpartum

Growing evidence supports doula care:

- Policy momentum → Creation of alternative reimbursement pathways → expanded access to doula-partnered care

Yet, barriers persist:

- Scarcity of hospitals with formally established doula partnerships
- Challenges to effective interprofessional integration

Health systems seeking to integrate doulas in clinical care must understand **the perspectives of frontline clinicians and nurses** is essential to anticipating barriers, identifying facilitators, and developing strategies that support sustainable team-based collaboration for equitable perinatal care.

OBJECTIVE

- Explore the experiences and perspectives of frontline providers and nurses
- Identify shared and role-specific barriers, facilitators, and dynamics influencing hospital-based doula integration.

METHODS

Model: Mixed-methods pre-implementation needs assessment engaging two hospital-based stakeholder groups, perinatal clinicians and nurses at an academic medical center.

Participants:

- 22 healthcare workers across OB/GYN and Family Medicine

Data Collection:

- Survey about knowledge and attitudes towards doulas
- Semi-structured interview exploring
 - Experiences with doulas
 - Perceptions of doula integration in a hospital setting
 - Factors influencing collaboration in perinatal care

Findings were synthesized to identify shared and role-specific themes related to the needs and experiences of hospital-based clinicians and nurses.

22 Healthcare Workers completed survey

Semi-Structured Interviews

6 Clinicians (OB/GYN & FM)

7 Perinatal Nurses

REFERENCES

Bohren MA, Hofmeyr GJ, Sakala C, Fukuzawa RK, Cuthbert A. Continuous Support for Women during Childbirth. Accessed April 11, 2025. <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD003766.pub6/full>

Falconi AM, Bromfield SG, Tang T, et al. Doula care across the maternity care continuum and impact on maternal health: Evaluation of doula programs across three states using propensity score matching. eClinicalMedicine. 2022;50:101531.doi:10.1016/j.eclinm.2022.101531

RESULTS

KEY QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

18%

reported adequate knowledge of doula training and scope, despite valuing their care.

71.4%

of nurses reported rarely working with doulas, suggesting limited baseline exposure to doula-partnered clinical care.

QUALITATIVE THEMES

Across all participants, doulas were viewed as:

- Valuable contributors to:
 - ✓ Patient advocacy
 - ✓ Health education
 - ✓ Emotional support
 - ✓ Patient-centered care
 - ✓ Communication effectiveness

Three themes emerged across stakeholder groups:

- Trust and relational dynamics
- Communication and role clarity
- Implementation infrastructure
- Workflow integration

Clinician Beliefs:

- Although most clinicians endorsed doulas as beneficial, half remained neutral regarding effects on birth outcomes and communication effectiveness.
- Interactive, doula-present education over passive modules, identifying major implementation challenges

Destabilizing influences included:

Role confusion, mistrust, inconsistent communication, unclear boundaries, role delineation, and lack of formal institutional infrastructure.

Stabilizing influences included:

Collaborative working relationships, open communication, and recognition of doulas' complementary contributions to care

Perinatal Opinions:

- Nurses primarily described doula integration as a bedside relational process shaped by the triadic nurse-patient-doula relationship.
- Clinicians more often emphasized systems-level concerns including communication reliability, interdisciplinary respect, and role boundaries across care settings

CONCLUSION

- There is support among perinatal clinicians and nurses for integration of doulas
- More opportunities are needed for engagement and collaboration
- There is a need for improved communication, clear role delineation, and stronger interdisciplinary relationships