BACKGROUND

• Increasing numbers of women with physical disabilities (WPD) become pregnant every year (44,200) and the number is expected to progressively increase.

• WPD report lack of knowledgeable health care providers (HCPs) about pregnancy and being discouraged from childbearing by HCPs, family members, and strangers.

• WPD report lack of information about pregnancy in the context of disability, resulting in fear and anxiety.

• Childbirth education (CBE) is a potential source of information for WPD but not well examined.

• CBE is a “rite of passage” to prepare women for labor and delivery, but many WPD do not attend based on beliefs that classes are relevant to them.

• WPD who do attend CBE report that information is not related to their disability and is not helpful to them.

• Information about CBE and focus on disability is largely anecdotal and its value unknown.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Purpose: To examine knowledge, experiences and perceptions of childbirth educators (CBEs) in providing prenatal education to WPD.

Study Design: A qualitative descriptive study was conducted through semi-structured telephone interviews using an interview guide.

METHODS

Recruitment and Procedures

• Childbirth educators (CBEs) were recruited through social media sites, CBE organizations, personal contacts, and snowball sampling.

• Inclusion criteria: actively involved in providing CBE classes, willing to participate in study, and available for telephone interview.

Telephone interviews addressed the following issues:

• Number of years teaching CBE classes and number of WPD in their classes.

• CBEs’ levels of knowledge and comfort related to disability and pregnancy.

• Source of information about pregnancy in WPD.

• CBEs’ demographic characteristics.

Analysis of interview data

• Other research team members read themes and relevant quotes independently and selected quotes that best reflected the themes. Interviews were professionally transcribed and verified for accuracy. Conventional content analysis was used to analyze transcripts of interviews.

• Two researchers read all transcripts to identify initial categories, which were used to code and identify relevant quotes for each code.

• A group meeting was convened to obtain consensus on themes and quotes to capture themes.

Sample

• 15 CBE from across the U.S. 8 were nurses, 7 were not nurses.

• 1 – 35 years as CBE instructor; 236.5 years of total CBE experience with mean of 15.9 years.

• Total number of WPD they recalled having in their CBE classes: 37; 6 reported never having a WPD in CBE classes. No CBE ever received education/training about disability

• Six CBEs validated the summary of themes provided to them to address trustworthiness.

RESULTS - THEMES

1. Viewed childbirth education important for all women with/without a disability

• Important for all women

• Modifications and challenges for WPD

• Diversity in disability

2. Inadequate education of CBE about disability

• Lack of education/training related to disability

• Comfort level high; knowledge level low

• Gaps in knowledge.

3. CBEs indicated a willingness to learn about disability to improve experiences of WPD

• Communicating with WPD in classes

• Strategies to improve care of WPD

4. Assumptions/misconceptions of CBEs about WPD

• Most WPD likely require C-sections

• WPD do not want to be asked about their disability when in CBE class

• Most WPD would like separate class on L&D

Summary and Conclusion: CBEs received no education or training about disability, but believed WPD would benefit from CBE classes. They think education/training about disability would be helpful and would make them more effective if/when they have WPD in their classes. Some responses indicate that CBEs make incorrect assumptions about WPD and pregnancy.