



Women's experiences and perspectives during early pregnancy miscarriage in the emergency department: a literature review

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Introduction

Approximately 20% of pregnancies will result in first-trimester miscarriage (1). These can be tragic and significant events in a woman's life with long-term psychological consequences. Women often present to emergency departments (EDs), a perceived chaotic and fast-paced environment, with symptoms of early pregnancy miscarriage. They have fears and questions about the viability of their pregnancy, and the care they receive may not align with their expectations (2). The needs of this patient group are often poorly met in the ED (2).

Objectives

To undertake a literature review of the experiences of women who present to the ED with early pregnancy miscarriage.

Methods

A systematic literature review was undertaken using 3 electronic databases: CINAHL, MEDLINE, and PSYCHINFO. A search strategy was created using the PEO framework (3) with the search terms ('miscarriage' OR 'vaginal bleeding' OR 'uterine haemorrhage' OR 'spontaneous abortion' OR 'pregnancy loss') AND ('emergency' OR 'ED' OR 'A&E') AND ('patient' OR 'experience' OR 'expectation'). After applying inclusion criteria, a quality assessment appraisal was carried out using the CASP checklist for qualitative studies (4). A thematic analysis of the results was undertaken.

Results

Six studies judged to be of good or high quality met the inclusion criteria for this review. Themes from these studies were tabulated. This demonstrated dissatisfaction from women in four key areas (see figure to the right):

1. the ED environment
2. poor communication and psycho-social care
3. lack of follow-up care
4. lack of information

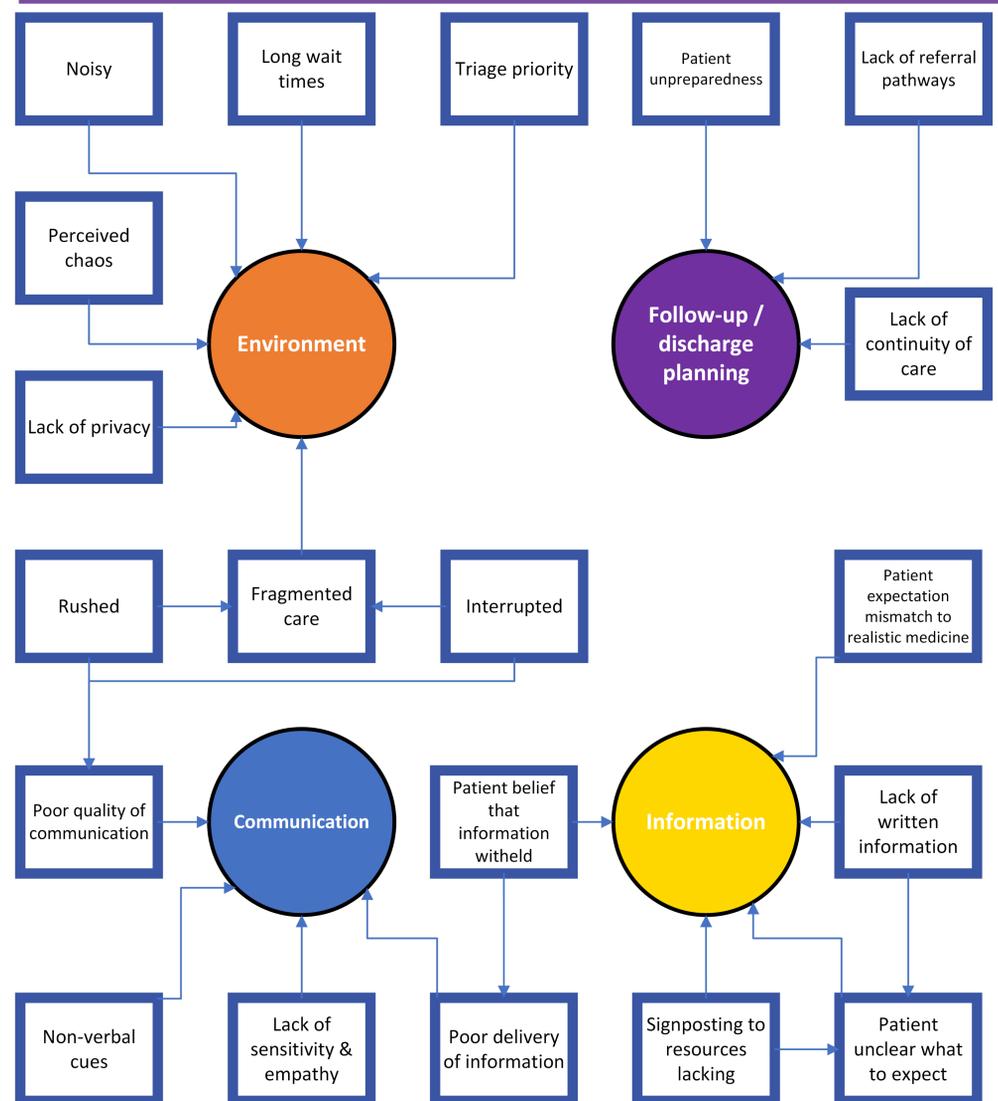
Conclusions

To meet the expectations of women with miscarriage, EDs must improve provision of information, environment, communication, psychological and emotional care, and discharge planning for follow-up care. These needs are fundamental to women's judgements of whether healthcare encounters meet their expectations. The trauma of miscarriage can have a significant impact on a woman's psychological health for many years and highlights why the care delivered during this time must be person-centred and demonstrate empathy. This study highlights key areas for future research and quality improvement where the ED can improve care for this patient group.

References

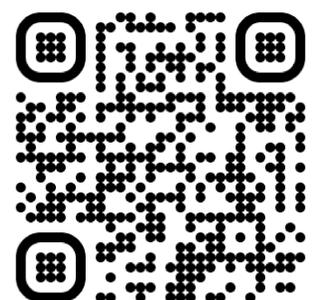
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Themes identified from the literature review



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