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Phillips, Mari

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Original Citation

Phillips, Mari (2012) 'Woman centred care' the language of practice, policy and professional regulation. In: RCM Annual Conference, 13-14th November 2012, Brighton Centre. (Unpublished)

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‘WOMAN CENTRED CARE’ THE LANGUAGE OF PRACTICE, POLICY AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

Dr Mari Phillips

- Philosophy of ‘woman centred care’
- The research study
- Findings related to language
- Review of terminology in policy and professional documentation
- Language, influence and power (Allison, 2012; Donna, 2011; Leap, 2012; Pollard, 2011)
- Implications for practice and ‘woman centred care’

The Research Study

- Women's experiences of maternity care
- Ethical approval
- Fieldwork – interviews and observations
- Phase One – 12 women and 9 midwives
- Phase Two – 5 women and the midwives involved in their care

(Phillips, 2009)

Findings related to language

- ‘Ladies’ and ‘primis’
- ‘Girls’ and ‘lassies’
- ‘Patients’
- Terms of endearment
- Midwives about midwives

'Ladies' and 'primis'

- “...it means that the ladies come here for the scan, primis come at twenty-eight weeks and thirty-eight weeks and term plus, mults only come at the scan and at thirty eight weeks...” (M17, p.3)
- “...whereas your own ladies, you know, because you see them every time...” (M31.1, p.11)

'Girls' and 'lassies'

- “...*the younger girls are generally happy to...*” (M19, p.10)
- “...*yeah, there’s one or two lassies who would have said...*” (M21, p.21 p13)

- *“...I get the feedback from my patients...”*
(M27.1, p.4)
- *“...the numbers of women I see...it’s quite nice when another colleague will see a patient...”* (M28.1, p.6-7)

- *“.....but you always tell the lady, right luvvie... you’ve been doing all right but....”*

(M21, p.10)

- *“...she had addressed [...] with a lot of endearments; ‘darling’ being the commonest, also ‘sweetheart’ and sometimes she called her a ‘good girl’...”*

(Field note WB25, p.2)

- *“...most of the girls do, yes...[call the coordinator]”* (M36.1, p.2)
- and...
- *“...you know this girl has got problems...”*
(M36.1, p.7)

Specifics...

- Transcripts from 9 midwives interviewed in first phase of study
- 3 midwives used the terms woman to refer to the pregnant women – exclusively
- 4 midwives used the term ladies consistently – up to 29 times in an interview
- 1 midwife used term ladies 6 times but also used term patient 18 times
- 1 transcript showed the term women used on 14 occasions – but this included interviewer's use - but used ladies 6 times and patients 3 times

Review of terminology in policy and professional documentation

- “...a more careful selection of patients for domiciliary confinements and for admission to hospital...”(Ministry of Health, 1959, p.91)
- “...to consider the future of the domiciliary midwifery service and the question of bed needs for maternity patients...”
(Central Health Services Council, 1970, p.1)

Review of terminology in policy and professional documentation

Winterton Report (House of Commons, 1992)

- “...we conclude that there is a strong desire among women for the provision of continuity of care and carer...” (House of Commons, 1992, para.49)

Government’s response (DH, 1992)

- “...we agree with the Committee that the development of client-held records....” (DH, 1992, para. 2.1.4)

- 'Patient' predominated (Central Midwives Board Handbook (CMB), 1962, 1979; CMB, 1978)

- Discrepancy between the written language of official reports, policy and regulatory documents and the verbal language used by the midwives in their daily practice
- Not common to all midwives but the midwives did not always recognise this characteristic of their language and the concomitant issues of influence, power and control

Does it matter?

- Social reality produced and made real through discourses (Phillips and Hardy, 2002)
- Discourse analysis offers a window into the communication between individuals (Burns et al, 2012)
- Critical discourse analysis stimulates critical awareness of language (Talbot, 2010)

- Use of language as part of midwife's role
- Improving women's confidence
- How does language fit with 'woman centred care'?

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