

Intuition and Care

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Abstract

Intuition is defined as knowledge acquisition often without interpretation or the use of logical reasoning [1]. It is also termed as gut feeling, sixth sense, clues, experience, rational thinking, autonomous decision making and inner self. Intuition is a very individualized feeling about a particular person, or a situation; and, as health care providers being midwives and nurses, we most of the time use intuition to plan interventions. Surprisingly, most of the time we are correct; one of the reasons behind may be years of experience practicing in a similar situation. As midwives and nurses move along from the novice to expert level, use of intuition builds up from analytical approach to a more of a deliberative rationalization. Hence, intuition can be learnt and strengthened as an ongoing process.

Keywords: Intuition; Childbirth; Midwife's Role; Care

What Is Intuition?

Intuition is the ability to acquire knowledge without interpretation or the use of reason [1]. Many scholars also name it as gut feeling, sixth sense, clues, experience, rational thinking, autonomous decision making and inner self. Young in 1987 defines clinical intuition as a process in which the health care provider midwife or nurse knows something about a patient that cannot be verbalized, or verbalized with difficulty as the source of knowledge may not be determined [2].

According to Flora in 2007, intuition is divided in two main types including:

- Expert Intuition: This develops on the basis of having years of experience. An expert thinks intuitively and knows how to react, without having an analytical thought in a slightly different situation.
- Entrepreneurial Intuition: This is practiced in an entirely new situation. Our personal years of experience play an important role to make the right brain search for similar patterns that help to make decisions intuitively.

Can Midwives Use Intuition While Caring For Women During Childbirth?

My sister was in labor and I was with her, I had an intuition that she will have a normal childbirth. My sister's labor was progressing

gradually and both mother and baby were vitally stable. Finally, the time came and the baby was delivered normally. Then, I sat back and reflected that what led me to generate the feeling regarding my sister to have a normal childbirth. I thought was it my knowledge and skills only or my experience or intuition? I realized that it was a combination of knowledge, skills, experience that led me to trust my intuition. Midwives can confidently use intuitive skills to promote normality during childbirth.

While providing maternity care, midwives use intuition as a basis of authoritative knowledge and skill. Midwives find their inner self physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually closely connected to the laboring woman and the baby. Therefore, this connectedness makes intuition more powerful leading to credible decision making [3]. Benner in 2001 asserts that at an expert level, health care providers not only rely on systematic situational analysis but they also incorporate intuitive abilities to identify strategies required to solve the problem [4]. Thus, when they move from novice to an expert level, their intuitive capabilities strengthen their professional role [5]. Nurses also practice in a similar manner while providing quality care.

Benner's Stages of Clinical Competence [4]

In the acquisition and development of a skill, a health care provider either a midwife or a nurse pass through the following five stages; simultaneously, at every stage intuition is also used.

Stages of Benner	Use of Intuition
Novice Rigid adherence to taught rules Little situational perception	Analytical approach
Advanced Beginner Situational perception limited	Pattern recognition and similarity recognition

Pattern recognition Cannot sort out what is most important in complex situation	
Competent Coping with pressure Sees actions in terms of longer-term goals Conscious planning and problem solving High self-esteem and contingent	Common sense understanding , can listen inner voice and sort out pattern
Proficient Sees situations holistically Sees what is most important in a situation Uses intuition and “know-how”	Sense of salience and skilled-know how
Expert No longer relies on rules, guidelines or maxims Intuitive grasp of situations based on deep understanding Analytic approaches used only in novel situation	Deliberative rationality

Table 1: Benner's Stages of Clinical Competence

Health care providers including midwives and nurses use clinical reasoning to guide their interventions. Therefore, moving from novice to expert level, intuition might play an important role in guiding clinical decision making. Furthermore, we should understand that clinical decision making often may or may not follow an organized analytic process. Likewise, while practicing midwifery or nursing care, a particular decision making model is required to guide midwives and nurses critical thinking skills. Hence, it is seen that midwives and nurses apply analytical approaches along with intuition to plan care.

Cognitive researches pertaining to the human brain show that, the left hemisphere is responsible for analytical reasoning, and the right hemisphere supports Gestaltic view and thinking [6,7]. Through these evidences we understand that logical reasoning and thought process work as needed. Often we do not reflect on the actions that are taken in a particular situation, so in those circumstances we cannot prove intuition or logical reasoning right or wrong. Hence, knowledge along with skills and experience influence our interventions.

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