

An Icelandic Midwifery Saga Coming to Light: "With woman" and connective ways of knowing

Ólöf Ásta Ólafsdóttir



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Through the ages women have had midwives to help at their birth. This book is about an ethnographic narrative study conducted in Iceland, exploring midwives' storytelling about their knowledge experience and working life in the period from the mid twentieth century to the present time. During interviews with twenty six midwives birth stories were collected. The findings describe the core narrative which surrounds the act of "being with" woman" during birth, considered to be fundamental in making connections with women and the birth itself to learn different ways of knowing, including the intuitive, spiritual and theoretical. Icelandic midwives have a common philosophy of care that is associated with a midwifery partnership model of care, incorporated in the ideological statements of the Icelandic midwifery education. Yet, as in other countries, modern maternity care in centralized hospitals pushes midwives toward industrial and medical models of care. This can have detrimental effects on the many facets of midwifery relationships with women and midwives' ways of knowing. The danger is that midwifery knowledge and skills will be lost to promote normality and safety of birth.



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