Concealed Pregnancy: A Concept Analysis

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Objective:

This paper presents a concept analysis of concealed pregnancy. A definition of concealed pregnancy will be presented as there is a need for a theoretical understanding of the process of concealment. Concealed pregnancy is a complex phenomenon and significant public health issue.

A concept of concealed pregnancy is important if health and social care professionals are to understand the process and offer effective care. Risks of concealment to the mother include an absence of/ inadequate antenatal care, unassisted birth, unprepared for childbirth, poor adaptation postpartum, emotional distress, obstetric complications or maternal death. Risks for the infant include failure to detect anomalies amenable to treatment, low birth weight, SGA, birth injuries and admission to NICU. Newborn abandonment, infanticide and neonaticide are closely associated with concealed pregnancy. The impact of concealment on attachment is unknown. Recurrence of concealed pregnancy may be a feature.

Method:

A search was performed on the Cinahl, PsychArticles, PsychInfo and Medline databases using “concealed pregnancy” and “denial of pregnancy” as key words from the years 1990-2013. Reports, guidelines and index of thesis were also reviewed. A thematic analysis of these papers will identify the main characteristics of concealed pregnancy. Wilson’s conceptual framework was utilised to analyse this concept as it takes cognisance of social contexts.

Conclusion:

No concept analysis of concealed pregnancy exists and this presentation provides scope for debate. The critical attributes, antecedents and consequences of concealed pregnancy will be described. Understanding the concept of concealed pregnancy is important for developing research, policy responses and services for women and babies.

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