

POSTER

‘THE VIEW FROM HERE’ – ANXIETY AND DEFENCES AGAINST ANXIETY IN THE PROVISION OF MATERNITY CARE TO ONE MOTHER AND BABY

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Being emotionally open in a maternity setting is a necessary part of the job of the midwife and consultant doctor. In fact, it is recognised as a key aspect of relationship-based work. However, it can be complex and uncertain, particularly in the face of a mother and baby who are separated through death at birth or serious illness at birth.

This paper is interested in exploring the necessary conditions for relating and reflecting in maternity settings when babies are born with life threatening illnesses. With particular emphasis on one case example from personal experience, this paper offers wisdom from the margins in the hope that it might contribute positively to thinking and learning about these experiences in frontline hospital settings. It will focus on how the intensity of the work with one mother and baby and the strength of emotion associated with that work disrupted the nurses’ capacity to think.

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Drawing on the classic work of Isabel Menzies Lyth (1968) and later Sebastian Kraemer (2015), the paper will consider the types of anxiety and defences present in the encounter and in the ongoing treatment of this mother and baby. The paper will explore how treatment and care was received by the mother and what might have enhanced that provision of care. ■