

Variation in 17 obstetric care pathways: potential danger for health professionals and patient safety?

January 31, 2013

Sarrechia M, Van Gerven E, Hermans L, et al. Variation in 17 obstetric care pathways: potential danger for health professionals and patient safety? J Adv Nurs. 2013;69(2):278-85. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2012.06004.x.

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/variation-17-obstetric-care-pathways-potential-danger-health-professionals-and-patient-safety>

A considerable body of literature documents [widespread variations](#) in outcomes for patients hospitalized at different hospitals for similar conditions. Care pathways are intended to improve outcomes by standardizing use of evidence-based practices, and a [surgical pathway](#) was recently shown to markedly reduce both complications and postoperative mortality. However, this survey of obstetric care pathways for normal deliveries at Belgian hospitals found that the 17 pathways analyzed varied widely and did not consistently apply evidence-based practices to prevent postpartum complications. A devastating series of preventable complications during delivery, which led to the death of an infant, is discussed in this classic [commentary](#), and lessons learned from the case have been incorporated into a [video](#) widely used for teaching purposes.