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PERCEPTIONS OF FEELINGS AND CONCERNS OF NEW FATHERS AND THE EFFECTS OF EPIDURAL ANESTHESIA ON THEIR SPOUSES

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The use of epidural anesthesia as an intervention for pain relief has increased in the labor and delivery setting over the past years. Literature has not identified what effects the addition of this technology has had on the normal childbirth process and those participating in childbirth, specifically the new father.

The purpose of this study is to identify and explore first-time father's perceptions of their feelings and concerns during various phases of the labor and delivery experience in which epidural anesthesia is used. The study addresses the following research questions: a) What are the perceptions of first-time fathers regarding their feelings and concerns at each of the following three stages in the labor and delivery experience: pre-epidural, post-epidural, and at time of delivery of their newborn? b) Do the levels of concerns and feelings differ during the different stages identified previously?

The convenient sample consisted of first-time fathers whose newborns were delivered in a small Midwest, rural community hospital. Subjects who met the following criteria: a) married at least one year; b) first baby for both father and mother; c) completion of childbirth education classes; d) epidural anesthesia during childbirth were included in the convenient sample (n=10). Fathers were surveyed through self administered questionnaire which was partly derived from The Barry Expectant Fathers Stress Index (BEFSI) . Prior to administration, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of expert nurses for content and readability.

The data from the questionnaires regarding perceptions and relevant demographic data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS/PC+). Implications for future research and conclusions are delineated.