

Nitrous Oxide Labor Analgesia: Identifying Healthcare Providers Perceived Barriers and Benefits

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Abstract

Goal: Identify the perceived barriers and benefits to the use of nitrous oxide labor analgesia among Providence Sacred Heart and Holy Family Hospital providers and nurses who work with women during childbirth.

Background: Inhaled nitrous oxide labor analgesia is identified as a safe and effective pain management option. However, women in the U.S. have limited access and this option is not currently offered locally. There is both resistance and support to implementing nitrous oxide labor analgesia among healthcare providers and nurses in Spokane, Washington.

Methods: An anonymous survey explored the perceived barriers and benefits of nitrous oxide labor analgesia. Data included demographics, 13 Likert-scaled items, and 3 open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data were grouped and summarized.

Results: Most responses (N=58) were from registered nurses (n=46). Barriers were knowledge of the safety (28%) and efficacy (33%) of nitrous oxide and lack of support for implementation from all disciplines (52%). Respondents reported that women would utilize nitrous oxide during labor (81%) and that it would improve patient satisfaction (72%). Respondents were open to receiving training to support the use of nitrous oxide (93%) and supported the implementation of nitrous oxide for analgesia (77%).

Implications for Practice: Survey results support implementation of nitrous oxide labor analgesia but also identified challenges. Providing staff education on safety and efficacy of nitrous oxide and addressing the perceived lack of support from all disciplines could help facilitate the successful implementation of a nitrous oxide labor analgesia program.