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Current perceptions of childbirth risk: is it about safety or control?

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Current perceptions of childbirth risk: is it about safety or control?

The concept of childbirth can be terrifying, and current cesarean rates across Canada support the narrative childbirth requires medical intervention to be safe. But do current perceptions of childbirth improve safety or simply increase control of a natural physiological process? Maternity providers' perception of childbirth and its associated risks can be shaped by their education, model of practice, and personal and professional experiences. Therefore, the management of risk in childbirth places increasing limitations on the childbirth experience when focus is solely placed on optimizing safety. Prioritization of safety can lead to increased medical intervention and minimization of choice. This loss of control in childbirth can have significant physical, emotional, and psychological health consequences in postpartum persons. The optimization of maternity care requires understanding of providers' perceptions of childbirth risk, and factors influencing such perceptions, to ensure respectful and inclusive decision-making in the management of risk in childbirth and maternity care.