AIMS For a better birth...

Supporting those who witness bad practice

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Beverley Beech makes some suggestions

It is not uncommon for those who are supporting a woman during childbirth to witness bad practice and then wonder what can be done about it. Here are someprinciples:

Advise the woman to obtain her own copy of her case notes (it is not uncommon for the notes to be at odds with what was obser ved).

Talk to those who also witnessed the incident and determine whether or not they would support your view of what occurred.

When you have a quiet moment, sit down and write an account of what you obser ved, who was present and what action was taken at the time.

Discuss what happened with the couple, if possible, and determine what they want to do about it. If the woman has been traumatised then it may be many weeks before you are able to raise the issue.

Support them with what they have decided they would like to do about it. If they do not feel able to make a complaint they may be willing for you to make a complaint on their behalf.

Obtain a copy of 'Making a complaint about maternity care' from AIMS.

Contact AIMS and discuss the options.

Then what to do? There are a number of options:

Discuss what happened with the staff concerned.

Arrange a meeting with the Head of Midwifery (HoM) to discuss your concerns.

Alternatively, particularly if you feel that the HoM will not take action, write to the Chief Executive with a copy to the HoM. This ensures that senior management are aware of the issue and there is a record of a previous concern should a similar event occur again.

If you observed malpractice or negligence, you have the option of reporting the member of staff to their professional body:

- midwives, nurses and health visitors – Nursing and Midwifer y Council

- doctors – General Medical Council
- social workers – Health Care Professions Council

Beverley Lawrence Beech