Perinatal experiences of women with physical disabilities and their recommendations for clinicians.

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Abstract: To explore the perinatal experiences of women with physical disabilities (WWPD) and their associated recommendations for maternity care clinicians to improve care. A mixed-methods study was conducted with a semistructured interview guide to identify the experiences of WWPD. This qualitative descriptive study was part of a larger study of the unmet needs and barriers to perinatal care experienced by WWPD. Twenty-five women with physical disabilities who gave birth within the last 10 years and were 21 to 55 years of age were recruited and agreed to participate in the study. Participants were asked about their interactions with clinicians during pregnancy and their recommendations for clinicians to improve perinatal care for women with physical disabilities. Content analysis was used to analyze transcribed interviews. Themes that emerged from analysis of the interviews were identified and coded. Kurasaki's coding was used to establish the reliability of the coding. Three themes emerged from analysis of the interview data: Clinicians' lack of knowledge about pregnancy-related needs of WWPD; Clinicians' failure to consider women's knowledge, experience, and expertise about their own disabilities; and Clinicians' lack of awareness of the reproductive concerns of WWPD. Women provided recommendations that warrant attention from clinicians who provide perinatal care for women who live with physical disabilities. Participants experienced problematic interactions with clinicians related to pregnancy and identified recommendations for maternity care clinicians to address those problems with the goal of improving perinatal health care for WWPD.