Disciplinary Discourses: Rate of caesarean section explained by medicine, midwifery and feminism
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Abstract

In the context of public comment on increasing rates of caesarean sections, explanations of the phenomenon arising from the disciplines of medicine, midwifery and feminism were examined to identify relevant discourses. Selected articles in peer-reviewed journals and the professional literature representative of each discipline were subject to discourse analysis. It was found that each discipline positioned itself differently in relation to the rising rates, with sets of discourses revolving around a central idea or ideology. Medical discourses asserted that doctors are authorities on birth; midwifery discourses portrayed medicine as paternalistic; and feminist discourses were based on the ideology of a patriarchally structured medical system. The findings illustrate the complex ways in which this intervention in birth is discursively constructed, and demonstrates its significance as a site of disciplinary conflict. Looking beyond the epidemiology and outside a single disciplinary lens can illuminate the personal, social and professional significance of surgical intervention in birth. It is argued that medical and public professionals need to recognise the multiple meanings and interpretative possibilities pertaining to caesarean sections and their increasing use in the developed world.