

RESEARCH BASED TEMPLATE

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Managing pain during IUD insertions: exploring the views of healthcare providers working in Victoria, Australia

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Background:

Intrauterine devices (IUDs) are extremely effective contraceptive devices that are inserted into the uterus by trained healthcare providers, often in the general practice setting. Research clearly shows that IUD insertion is often painful, and that unexpected or unmanaged pain can have significant, ongoing implications for the user. Although different IUD insertion guidelines include a range of pain relief options that can be provided during this procedure, little is known about how healthcare providers decide which pain relief to offer or recommend.

Methods:

Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted in 2024 with healthcare providers working in Victoria, Australia, and who had inserted at least one IUD since 2020. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Results:

Sixteen healthcare providers participated. We identified four key themes- *Managing pain involves: diverse and adaptable strategies; conflicts in duty of care; awareness of and response to patient's expected and actual pain; and systemic barriers to pain management*. Overall, participants reported that a standardised approach to pain management is not feasible for IUD insertion and that flexible pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical strategies are required, based on the patients' preference and facilities / resources available at clinic level. Patient preparedness for the procedure was also noted as a critical factor. Participants suggested that maintaining standards of patient-centred care could be challenging during IUD insertions, and that in some cases, clinical and structural barriers impeded their ability to provide certain pain management strategies.

Conclusion:

Managing pain during IUD insertions is complex, requiring a flexible approach depending on the needs of the patient. Although our participants identified some clinical and structural barriers to the pain management strategies they can offer to their patients, overall, they reported satisfaction with the options available, noting that some level of discomfort during an IUD insertion is to be expected.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

We report no conflicts of interest.