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| **Participant perceptions: Important factors in program design, implementation, evaluation, and ongoing success** |
| **Background/Objectives**  Early childhood sustained nurse home visiting (SNHV) programs have shown positive impacts on maternal and child health and well-being. However program effectiveness has traditionally been demonstrated through successful outcomes as determined by providers and researchers. Evidence about mechanisms by which programs are effective, and components and process crucial to success is from perspectives of program developers, providers and nurses. There has been little exploration into participants’ perceptions of what they receive, the impact it has and the value they place on it. SNHV programs are being rolled out in Australia and overseas. A complete understanding of how and why they work, including from the mothers’ perspective, is needed to ensure appropriate, effective program delivery, monitoring and evaluation.  **Methods**  A study that investigated the contribution SNHV programs make to achieving perceived positive outcomes, particularly for mothers with psychological vulnerability, through exploration of the experiences of mothers who participated in the Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home-Visiting (MECSH) trial, is used as a case study. Study participants were vulnerable, at-risk mothers living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Study findings are compared to current evidence to highlight the importance of including participant perceptions.  **Results**  What participants in the MECSH trial wanted, needed and valued was generally in line with evidence for what program developers, providers, nurses, and researchers, consider important. Findings however provide a more complete picture. They confirmed characteristics and practices that should be continued, identified those needing to be improved, or incorporated into practice, and identified important considerations for ongoing program monitoring and evaluation.  **Discussion**  The inclusion of participant perceptions is vital to program design, implementation, evaluation, and ongoing success of SNHV programs. This is especially important for programs aimed at vulnerable, at-risk vulnerable populations in disadvantaged areas. The findings also suggest that it would be important for any type of program, including health promotion programs, aimed at improving health and wellbeing, and equitable outcomes.  **Keywords**  Participant perceptions, sustained nurse home visiting, at-risk populations, program design, implementation, evaluation, policy and practice |