

# Nurses working concurrently as Death Doulas: A workforce conundrum?



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## Background / Methods

Some Registered Nurses work part-time as an RN and part-time as a death doula (DD). These diametrically opposing roles (a DD is non-medical) are attractive, with some nurses looking to transition away from nursing. Eight RNs working across both roles participated in an interview.

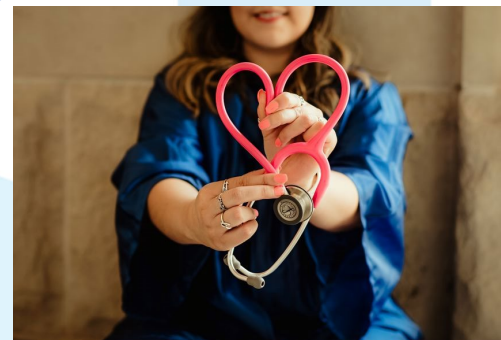
## Results

Themes: 1) interest in the role, 2) attraction of the role, 3) what is done as a doula that can't be done as a nurse, 4) separating the roles, 5) seeing patients as both a nurse and a doula, 6) monetary considerations, 7) service models, 8) future plans, 9) influence of nursing registration, and 10) nursing registration codes.

*"I'm not there in a medical role, I have to leave that behind. It's not a matter of giving advice or administering medication, stepping right away from that and just being in that space as a doula, not as a nurse" [Nurse3]*

*"It's the essence of why I became a nurse. I didn't become a nurse to do paperwork and all the sitting at a desk and not being with the people" [Nurse 8]*

*"it's the legalities and the legislative requirements that would always stop it. And I think that's the whole reason why I think I love death doulas because they're not bound by all of that" [Nurse 7]*



## Discussion, Conclusion

RNs take on the DD role often because it gives them time to spend with patients and families, not always available in nursing. Role flexibility, independence and a work/life balance are also attractive.

Role boundaries were difficult to maintain for some but very clear for others, with the clinical role very distinct from the non-medical DD role. Some had service agreements with clients to clarify they were there as a DD however were not necessarily aware that nursing codes of conduct apply at all times. The reality of this should be considered in relation to roles and responsibilities, codes of conduct and legal requirements.