



Strengthening Midwifery Globally

KEEPING BIRTH NORMAL

BACKGROUND

Midwives' practice must be informed by evidence-based knowledge to improve the quality and outcomes of care. 'Keeping birth normal' is an area of ICM strategy associated with:

- Issues of women's global health
- Midwifery professional issues
- Midwifery educational issues (evidence-based education)
- National governments' health policy
- Alliances with other NGOs, women and women's groups, parents supporting normal birth
- Teaching of reproductive health (and normal birth) from the school age.

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Midwives declare they are advocates of normal childbirth. They can demonstrate and support the advantages of normal birth but women's decisions are affected by socio-economic factors and health care systems. Some of the influential factors are:

1. Many women are not informed well enough about normal childbirth processes and some are frightened to trust their bodies and natural childbirth mechanisms
2. Many midwives are trained in hospital settings with technological support and may lack confidence in staying with nature's processes without any intervention.

ICM supports the following definition of normal childbirth:

A unique dynamic process in which fetal and maternal physiologies and psychosocial contexts interact (with the goal of mother and baby being well).

Normal birth is where the woman commences, continues and completes labour with the infant being born spontaneously at term, with cephalic birth presentation, without any surgical, medical, or pharmaceutical intervention, but with the possibility of referral when needed.

POSITION

ICM supports normal childbirth in countries since for the majority of women, pregnancy and childbirth are physiological life events. Women should have access to midwifery-led care, one-to-one support and interdisciplinary working, including the choice of a home birth and immersion in water. Midwifery associations must influence and work in collaboration with their ministries of health and other organisations. Note: the term childbirth encompasses pregnancy, birth and postnatal period.

GUIDING STATEMENT TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS:

All member associations are encouraged, in partnership with women, where midwives function as their advocates through the childbirth and neonatal period:

- to promote normal childbirth within the maternity service
- to enrich midwives' education in order to enhance skills and competencies in normal childbirth
- to organise educational courses to enhance midwives' practice in normal childbirth
- to increase midwives' awareness of the benefits of normal childbirth in terms of maternal and neonatal health
- to establish and use health care indicators and evaluate the results of midwives' practice in normal childbirth
- to confirm midwives as the primary caregiver and expert in normal childbirth
- to carry out research to demonstrate the effectiveness of midwifery care in normal childbirth.

Midwives should participate in the strategic planning and decision making process, therefore to influence governments for funding adequately maternity services.

Governments, politicians, and decision makers should support midwives and normal birth.

RELATED ICM DOCUMENTS

- ICM / FIGO / WHO. Definition of the Midwife. ICM, 2005.
- ICM. Vision Statement. ICM, 2008.
- ICM. Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice. ICM, 2002.
- ICM. Midwifery Associations and their Role in Keeping Birth Normal. ICM, 2006
- WHO/ICM/FIGO. Joint Statement: Making Pregnancy Safer: The Critical Role of the Skilled Attendant. ICM, 2004.

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- Maternity Care Working Party. Consensus statement-Making normal birth a reality. National Childbirth Trust/Royal College of Midwives/ Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, UK, 2007.

Adopted at Glasgow Council meeting, 2008

Due for next review 2014