



Strengthening Midwifery Globally

MIDWIFERY CARE FOR WOMEN WITH COMPLICATED BIRTHS

BACKGROUND

The rise in medicalisation of birth and the increase in women being treated for complications of childbirth create a need to strengthen the ethos of natural birth whenever and wherever possible through offering a holistic approach to care in pregnancy, labour and childbirth, including to those women who develop complications following the birth. It is important to ensure that women experiencing complications in childbirth receive the best possible care from an interdisciplinary team, which should include a midwife.

The World Health Organization states that childbirth is an event that easily lends itself to over medicalisation. The worldwide epidemic of unnecessary caesarean sections is a typical example and the potential for unintended adverse consequences for both infant and mother is real.

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

The ICM believes that a woman who develops complications during pregnancy, birth or the post-partum period requires care from a midwife. It is appropriate that the midwife is involved in the specialised obstetric or other care and the treatment relevant to the mother or newborn. The presence of the midwife will provide much-needed continuity of care and support in a situation where the woman may receive care from a number of health professionals not previously known to her, and as a result experience increased fears and anxieties. The midwife's approach to childbirth as a physiological and psychosocial process will optimise the woman's experience of childbirth and help her to prepare for motherhood and nurturing the baby with the best possible physical and mental health.

POSITION

The ICM will work to further its belief in the benefit of midwifery care to the woman with complicated childbirth. Wherever women are treated for medical disorders such as hypertension, cardiac disease, diabetes mellitus and anaemia in pregnancy; or obstetric complications such as assisted deliveries (vacuum, forceps and caesarean section), preterm delivery or complications of the postnatal period, they should be offered care by a midwife, according to the ICM definition of a midwife. The worldwide acceptance of the midwife acknowledges that midwives are the appropriate skilled professionals in normal childbirth and play an important role in the care and treatment of women experiencing complicated childbirth.

GUIDING STATEMENT TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS:

In their efforts to ensure that all women receive midwifery care, member associations of the ICM should not lose focus on the need to provide specialist care and treatment, involving a holistic midwifery approach, for those women who develop complications before, during and after giving birth.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

WHO. Facts and figures from the World Health Report 2005. WHO, 2005.

www.who.int/whr/2005/media_centre/facts_en.pdf (180405@1730)

WHO. The Critical Role of the Skilled Attendant. WHO, 2004.

Adopted at Glasgow Council meeting, 2008

Due for next review 2014