



NEWS RELEASE

ACNM RELEASES RESEARCH SHOWING SIGNIFICANT MIDWIFERY CARE BENEFITS

Key findings confirm women cared for by CNMs/CMs experience optimal health outcomes during pregnancy, childbirth, and beyond.

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Silver Spring, MD –An overview of research and statistics released today by the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) Division of Standards and Practice shows that women who receive the care of a midwife reap tangible benefits, including reduced infant mortality rates, decreased risk of cesarean section, and higher satisfaction with care.

“Decades of research show that midwives provide high-quality care with excellent outcomes,” said Lisa Kane Low, CNM, PhD, FACNM, of the ACNM Division of Standards and Practice. “The midwifery profession’s unique approach to care benefits the entire health care system, including hospitals, insurers, and, most importantly, women and babies.”

The nation’s more than 12,000 CNMs and CMs provide maternity and primary care services to women of all ages in hospitals, birth centers, and homes, with more than 50 percent of ACNM member midwives claiming hospitals and physician offices as their primary place of employment.ⁱ The ACNM overview *Midwifery: Evidence-Based Practice, a Summary of Research on Midwifery Practice in the United States* shows that compared to care provided exclusively by physicians, midwife-led care is associated with lower rates of labor induction, higher chances of vaginal birth, reduced risk of preterm birth, and higher chances of a successful start to breastfeeding. A 2011 Press-Ganey national survey also showed that women receiving care from midwives have care satisfaction levels in the 91-95 percentiles.

In addition to improved health outcomes, midwives’ high-touch, low-tech approach to care is associated with lower costs for clients and insurers. Midwives’ judicious, evidence-based use of technology results in a reduced likelihood of unnecessary interventions, including cesareans – a practice in the United States that dramatically increased in less than 40 years from 5 to 33 percent.ⁱⁱ

“When we eliminate unnecessary interventions in childbirth, we reduce the emotional and physical toll placed on women and newborns, and we also reduce costs,” said ACNM President Holly Powell Kennedy, CNM, PhD, FACNM, FAAN. “Midwifery care lowers health care costs in part by appropriate use of expensive technology and reducing cesarean birth rates.”

Experts concur that midwives are a growing solution to the health care workforce shortage. According to the Institute of Medicine’s Future of Nursing report, midwives have improved health care services for women in rural and inner-city areas and should be given more responsibility for providing care.

In a 2011 joint ACNM and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists press release,ⁱⁱⁱ Richard N. Waldman, MD, FACOG, past president of ACOG agreed, “Ob-gyns working collaboratively with midwives is a way to address the gap between the supply of ob-gyns and the demand for women’s health care services.”

Midwifery: Evidence-Based Practice, a Summary of Research on Midwifery Practice in the United States is available for public download at www.midwife.org/media-kit.

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The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) is the professional association that represents certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) in the United States. ACNM promotes excellence in midwifery education, clinical practice, and research. With roots dating to 1929, our members are primary care providers for women throughout the lifespan, with a special emphasis on pregnancy, childbirth, and gynecologic and reproductive health. ACNM provides research, administers and promotes continuing education programs, establishes clinical practice standards, and creates liaisons with state and federal agencies and members of Congress to increase the visibility and recognition of midwifery care.

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ⁱ ACNM Core Data Survey

ⁱⁱ Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Ventura SJ, Osterman JK, Kirmeyer S, Matthews TJ, Wilson, E. Births: Final data for 2009. National vital statistics reports; vol 59 no 1. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2011. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/>. Accessed October 1, 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ob-Gyns and Midwives Seek to Improve Health Care for Women and Their Newborns. 2011. American College of Nurse-Midwives website. <http://www.midwife.org/index.asp?bid=610>. Accessed May 7, 2012.