



Strengthening Midwifery Globally

The Philosophy and Model of Midwifery Care

BACKGROUND

A midwife is a person who, having been regularly admitted to a midwifery educational programme, duly recognised in the country in which it is located, has successfully completed the prescribed course of studies in midwifery and has acquired the requisite qualifications to be registered and /or legally licensed to practise midwifery. The International Confederation of Midwives believes that a midwife offers care based on a philosophy, which influences the model of care. This document outlines the philosophy and describes the model of midwifery care.

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

As midwives we believe that

1. Childbearing is a profound experience, which carries significant meaning to the woman, her family and the community.
2. Birth is a normal physiological process.
3. Midwives are the most appropriate care providers to attend women during pregnancy, labour, birth and the postnatal period.
4. Midwifery care empowers women to assume responsibility for their health and for the health of their families.
5. Midwifery care takes place in partnership with women and is personalised, continuous and non-authoritarian.
6. Midwifery care combines art and science. Midwifery care is holistic in nature, grounded in an understanding of the social, emotional, cultural, spiritual, psychological and physical experiences of women and based upon the best available evidence.
7. Midwives have confidence and trust in, and respect for women and their capabilities in childbirth.
8. The woman is the primary decision-maker in her care and she has the right to information that enhances her decision-making abilities.

As a result:

1. Midwifery care promotes, protects and supports women's reproductive rights and respects ethnic and cultural diversity
2. Midwifery practice promotes and advocates for non-intervention in normal childbirth
3. Midwifery practice builds women's self confidence in handling childbirth
4. Midwives use technology appropriately and effect referral in a timely manner when problems arise
5. Midwives offer anticipatory and flexible care

6. Midwives provide women with appropriate information and advice in a way that promotes participation and facilitates informed decision making
7. Midwifery care maintains trust and mutual respect between the midwife and the woman
8. Midwifery care actively promotes and protects women's wellness and enhances the health status of the baby.

GUIDING STATEMENT TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

Member associations can use this document as a guide in the education of midwives, organisation of midwifery care, supportive supervision of midwives and evaluation of care. It can also be used to guide the relationship between the midwife and the client. Member associations can share the statement with other health professions and governments during the development of regulations and legislation of midwifery practice.

RELEVANT ICM DOCUMENTS

- ICM Definition of the Midwife (2005)
- ICM Vision Statement (1999)
- ICM Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice (2002)
- ICM International Code of Ethics for Midwives (2002).

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), USA. Hallmarks of Midwifery Practice, in: Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice (2002)
- ACNM. Philosophy of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (2004)
- Australian College of Midwives Inc. Theoretical and Philosophical Frameworks and Models of Maternity Care (2000)
- Citizens for Midwifery, USA. Midwives' Model of Care (1996)
- Certified Professional Midwives, USA. Providing the Midwives' Model of Care (2000)
- College of Midwives of Ontario, Canada. Philosophy of Midwifery Care in Ontario (1994)
- Homer C, Brodie P, Leap N. Establishing Models of Continuity of Midwifery Care in Australia: A resource for Midwives and Managers (2001)
- New Zealand College of Midwives. Midwifery Model of Care (2000)
- New Zealand College of Midwives. Philosophy of Midwifery (2000)
- Royal College of Midwives, UK. Midwifery Model of Care (2000)
- Royal College of Midwives, UK. A Philosophy of Midwifery (1992)
- Thompson JE. Human rights framework for midwifery care. *Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health* (2004).