

PushNews from The Big Push for Midwives Campaign

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Largest US Study to Date Finds Home Birth to Be a Safe Option for Most Women

Research Adds to Medical Literature on the Benefits of Maternity Care Provided by Certified Professional Midwives

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 30, 2014)—The largest study to date looking at planned midwife-attended home births in the U.S. joins the growing body of medical literature confirming that it is a safe option for most women. The findings build on previous research concluding that women in the U.S. and Canada planning a home birth under the care of Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) experience outcomes comparable to women giving birth in the hospital, but with far fewer costly and unnecessary interventions. CPMs are the only midwives in the U.S. whose educational standards require them to undergo specialized clinical training in out-of-hospital settings as a condition of national certification.

(UPDATED STUDY LINKS: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jmwh.12172/pdf> and <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jmwh.12165/pdf>)

“As this study confirms, increasing numbers of families in the U.S., whether because of religious, cultural, financial, or personal reasons, are seeking a safe and affordable alternative to standard obstetrical care and rigid hospital policies and practices,” said Katherine Prown, PhD, Campaign Manager for The Big Push for Midwives. “But this sharp increase in out-of-hospital births also underscores the urgent need to make sure that midwives in every state who are attending births in private homes and freestanding birth centers have met the educational and training standards as CPMs to qualify them experts in out-of-hospital maternity care.”

Though the numbers were too small to draw definitive conclusions, the researchers found that for some women planning a home birth there was an association between carrying a breech baby or undergoing a vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC) and an increased risk of intrapartum fetal death. A significant proportion of pregnant women in the study were Amish or Mennonite, populations whose traditional religious practices discourage hospital care in the absence of critical medical conditions.

“While this study gives families one more tool for making informed decisions about the benefits and potential risks of home birth for their particular circumstances, it also reminds us that lawmakers, hospitals, and the medical establishment need to do a better job of fostering collaboration across birth settings to ensure that out-of-hospital midwives and all of the families they serve are fully integrated into the healthcare system,” said Susan M. Jenkins, Legal Counsel for The Big Push for Midwives Campaign. Currently just more than half the states authorize legal practice for CPMs.

The Big Push for Midwives Campaign represents tens of thousands of people in the United States advocating on behalf of expanded access to Certified Professional Midwives, who undergo specialized clinical training in out-of-hospital maternity care. The mission of The Big Push for Midwives is to provide strategic planning and message development for state advocacy and midwife groups that are actively working on legislation to license Certified Professional Midwives, envisioning the day when CPMs are licensed in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam.

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<http://www.mana.org/research/current-research-projects/home-birth-safety-outcomes>