



MIDWIFERY: THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A PROFESSION

Joyce E. Thompson, CNM, DrPH,
FAAN, FACNM

Director, ICM Board of
Management



GOAL OF PRESENTATION

“To explore the dimensions of professional midwifery and the key role that the International Confederation of Midwives plays in strengthening midwifery and midwifery associations globally.”



WHAT IS A PROFESSION?

- Unique body of knowledge and skills
- Clear statement of ethics
- Defined scope of practice
- Self-governing – autonomous
- Formal recognition by society



UNIQUE KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

- Discipline of midwifery – philosophy, model of care, distinct knowledge base and shared knowledge base
- Discipline of nursing different
- Discipline of obstetrics different
- All disciplines working with women share knowledge and skills



STATEMENT OF ETHICS

- General code of conduct (morals)
- Principled approach toward others
- Commitment to women seeking care
- Beliefs about practice of midwifery
- Professional responsibilities of midwives
- Advancing midwifery knowledge and practice



ICM INTERNATIONAL CODE OF ETHICS FOR MIDWIVES

- Preamble
- I. Midwifery relationships
- II. Practice of midwifery
- III. Professional responsibilities
- IV. Advancement of midwifery knowledge and skills



ICM CODE - PREAMBLE

- Human rights
- Justice for all
- Equity in access to services
- Respect for human dignity
- Trust in relationships



ICM CODE I: MIDWIFERY RELATIONSHIPS

- Woman's informed choices & responsibilities
- Empowering women with voices
- Women's needs & priorities – equity
- Nurturing self-worth of other midwives
- Work with other disciplines, referral
- Midwife as person of moral worth



ICM CODE II: PRACTICE OF MIDWIFERY

- Respect cultural diversity, change harmful practices
- Realistic expectations of childbirth
- Safe birth practices in all environments
- Respond to psychological, physical, emotional, spiritual needs of women
- Role model health promotion
- Seek intellectual & professional growth



ICM CODE III: PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Maintain confidentiality
- Responsible & accountable for decisions
- Conscientious refusal to care – when?
- Eliminate human rights violations
- Development health policies that promote needs of women & childbearing families



ICM CODE IV: ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE & PRACTICE

- Research protecting rights of women
- Develop & share midwifery knowledge, peer review
- Participate in formal education of midwifery students and ongoing education of midwives



DEFINED SCOPE OF PRACTICE

ICM INTERNATIONAL DEFINITION OF
THE MIDWIFE 1992 rev.

ICM ESSENTIAL COMPETENCIES FOR
BASIC MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

2002



INTERNATIONAL DEFINITION OF MIDWIFE

Formal education

Legal recognition

Scope of practice – autonomous
childbearing care, counseling



ICM ESSENTIAL COMPETENCIES

Based on ICM Documents:

Definition of Midwife (1992)

International Code of Ethics for Midwives

Global Vision for Women and their
Health (1996)

7 Delphi rounds internationally

Field testing in 17 countries



COMPONENTS OF ICM ESSENTIAL COMPETENCIES

- Key midwifery concepts – women as persons, partnership with women based on respect & trust, pregnancy normal
- Scope of practice – autonomous care of girl-child, adolescent, woman
- Midwifery model of care – woman-centered
- Framework for decision-making



COMPETENCY #1

“Midwives have the requisite knowledge & skills from the social sciences, public health and ethics that form the basis of high quality, culturally relevant, appropriate care for women, newborns, and childbearing families.”



COMPETENCY #2

“Midwives provide high quality, culturally sensitive health education and services to all in the community in order to promote healthy family life, planned pregnancies, and positive parenting.”



COMPETENCY #3

“Midwives provide high quality antenatal care to maximise the health during pregnancy and that includes early detection and treatment or referral of selected complications.”



COMPETENCY #4

“Midwives provide high quality, culturally sensitive care during labour, conduct a clean and safe delivery, and handle selected emergency situations to maximise the health of women and their newborn.”



COMPETENCY #5

“Midwives provide comprehensive, high quality, culturally sensitive postnatal care for women.”



COMPETENCY #6

“Midwives provide high quality, comprehensive care for the essentially healthy infant from birth to two months of age.”



GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS OF COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

- Agreed basic knowledge & skills
- Agreed additional knowledge & skills
- Agreed need to adapt to national & local practice needs
- Agreed to promote evidence-based practice
- Agreed monitoring & update process



SELF-GOVERNING PROFESSION

- Autonomous – midwives set standards of practice & education in midwifery
- Standards of practice based on scope of practice and essential competencies
- Willing to maintain standards – peer review, take action when midwife not practicing within standards and ethics



FORMAL RECOGNITION BY SOCIETY

- Regulation
 - Licensing
- Paid for services

Autonomy of profession requires
midwifery control/direction of regulation
&/or licensure



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WHO IS A PROFESSIONAL?

Individual member of profession who:

- Lives and practices in keeping with the profession's code of moral behavior (ethics)
- Practices in keeping with standards and scope established by the profession
- Maintains legal status for practice
- Contributes to knowledge base
- Values high quality care for women



WHY BE CONCERNED WHETHER MIDWIFERY IS A PROFESSION?

- Advantages
- Disadvantages
- Challenges/threats
- Opportunities



ADVANTAGES OF PROFESSIONAL STATUS

- Societal & cultural recognition of the value and unique contributions midwives make to the health of women & families - quality
- Held in high esteem by other members of health team – respected for knowledge & competencies
- Given rights/privileges along with responsibilities for high quality services



DISADVANTAGES OF PROFESSIONAL STATUS

- Exclusionary by nature – some will always be left out, eg. Traditional birth attendants, empirical midwives
- Requires formal education – costly
- High expectations of performance
- Can be punished if not practicing well



CHALLENGES OR THREATS

- Medical community will try to control, especially if women prefer midwives
- Others will attempt to define standards of practice if not vigilant; eg. nurses without midwifery competencies
- Midwives who do not practice competently lower status of all midwives



OPPORTUNITIES

- Partner with other health professions
- Leadership roles
- Ability to improve the health services for women and families – policy development
- Strong voice in community affairs



HONOR OUR PAST

CELEBRATE OUR PRESENT

PLAN FOR OUR FUTURE



HONOR OUR PAST

- Historical roots – TBAs, empirical midwives
- Tradition of being “with women” wherever they are
- Strong community focus
- Trusted and respected member of the community



CELEBRATE OUR PRESENT

- Increasing demand for persons with midwifery skills – great time to promote professional midwifery and midwives
- Education and research activities improve women's services and the status of midwives
- Hold key leadership & policy roles in international community - ICM



PLAN FOR OUR FUTURE

- **VISION** - ICM Vision for Women & Their Health 1996
- **STRATEGIC PLANNING** – ICM Strategy Goals 2002
- **LEADERSHIP** – ICM co-Chair Partnership for Safe Motherhood & Newborn Health 2003, White Ribbon Alliance Directing Council 2003
- **ACTION** – ICM projects: Strengthening midwifery associations, Young Midwifery Leaders



STRENGTHENING THE PROFESSION OF MIDWIFERY

- Strong midwives
- Strong midwifery associations
- Commitment to the goal of better health care for all women and families



ROLE OF ICM

- International Definition of the Midwife
- International Code of Ethics for Midwives
- Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice
- Global Vision and Strategic Goals
- Statements on Midwife Teacher Competencies
- Work on Standards of Practice
- Work on Curriculum Guidelines



ROLE OF ICM (con't)

- Global presence – partnerships
- Joint statements with ICN, FIGO, WHO
- Raising the profile of the midwife globally
- Position and Policy Statements



ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- Set & maintain standards of practice
- Adopt & use a code of ethics
- Define scope of practice and set regulations
- Define educational content and qualifications for midwifery teachers
- Offer ongoing education opportunities
- Provide leadership for health policies



FUTURE OF HEALTH OF WOMEN AND MIDWIVES

- Depends on professional midwives
- Depends on strong midwifery associations
- Depends on you and me.

**VISION WITH ACTION CAN CHANGE THE
WORLD!** Joel Barker