

Midwives: The Answer to the Maternity Care Provider Shortage

Shortages in the Maternity Care Workforce Deny Women and their Families Access to Highly-Qualified Providers

- The OB/GYN workforce is transitioning from a largely male profession to a largely female profession.ⁱ Female and male physicians balance their professional and personal lives differently. Women work fewer hours, work part time more frequently, and cease obstetric practice several years earlier.ⁱⁱ This has significant ramifications for workforce capacity in the coming years. Many more OB/GYNs are subspecializing into fields where they do not attend births.ⁱⁱⁱ
- In 2011, 40 percent of US counties had no certified nurse-midwife (CNM)/certified midwife (CM) or OB/GYN.^{iv}



Midwives Play an Important Role in Filling the Maternity Care Provider Shortage

- Many countries make much more significant use of midwives. Typically, in the developed world, there are approximately 2.5 midwives per OB/GYN.^v
- CNMs/CMs in the US could attend a larger proportion of normal physiologic births, freeing OB/GYNs to use their specialized skills to assist women with significant complications.
- The most significant barrier to educating more midwives is the capacity of educational programs to secure sites for clinical precepting to take place.^{vi}

Public Investment in Midwifery Education Would Create a Great Return on Investment

- Multiple studies demonstrate that women attended by midwives experience lower rates of cesarean birth than women with the same underlying health characteristics and risks attended by physicians.
- ACNM estimates that savings to Medicaid programs associated with midwifery practice from reduced cesarean births alone would, within three years, completely offset state investments to fully support precepting for midwifery students. Commercial payers in the state would save even more.
- Because educating midwives is more rapid and less costly than educating physicians, an investment into midwifery education will go a long way toward quickly alleviating shortages of trained maternity care providers.

Specific Steps States Can Take to Address the Maternity Care Provider Shortage

- Ensure CNMs who instruct medical interns and residents or midwifery students can be paid for the services rendered to Medicaid beneficiaries by those interns, residents and midwifery students when properly supervised by the teaching CNM.
- Georgia has developed a tax incentive program under which individual providers who precept students in their clinics for a sufficient number of hours can receive a tax credit of up to \$10,000. This model might be adopted by other states to incentivize precepting of midwifery students.

For a fuller discussion of these issues, see the presentation developed by ACNM, available at:

<http://www.midwife.org/acnm/files/ccLibraryFiles/Filename/000000005794/MaternityCareWorkforce-11-18-15.pptx>



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ⁱ American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. (2011). The Obstetrician Gynecologist Workforce in the United States: Facts, Figures, and Implications, William F. Rayburn, MD.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Rayburn, W., Gant, N., Gilstrap, L., Elwell, E., & Williams, S. (2012). Pursuit of accredited subspecialties by graduating residents in obstetrics and gynecology, 2000-2012. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 120(3), 619-625.

^{iv} Health Resources and Services Administration, Area Resource File. Analysis originally conducted on 3/1/2014 by Kate Crawford, Birth by the Numbers (www.birthbythenumbers.org)

^v Emons, J. K., & Luiten, M.I.J. (2001). Midwifery in Europe: An Inventory in fifteen EU-member states, Available at: http://www.deloitte.nl/downloads/documents/website_deloitte/GZpublVerloskundeinEuropaRapport.pdf

Se also: Eguchi, N. Do We Have Enough Obstetricians? – A survey of the Japan Medical Association in 15 countries. (2009, May/June). *JMAJ*, 52(3), 150-157. See also: Rowland, T., McLeod, Deborah, & Froese-Burns, N. (2012,

November). Comparative Study of Maternity Systems. Available at:

<http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/comparative-study-maternity-systems>

^{vi} Institute of Medicine. (2014, July 29). Graduate Medical Education that Meets the Nation's Health Needs. Available at: <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2014/Graduate-Medical-Education-That-Meets-the-Nations-Health-Needs.aspx>



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