

Vacuum Assisted Birth

While vacuum assisted birth is not a core competency, it is a skill that CNMs/CMs may acquire beyond basic midwifery education. Such skills are termed “expanded midwifery practice” and are addressed in general in the *QuickInfo* with that title. Please refer to that document for a description of the *Core Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice* and the *Standards for the Practice of Midwifery*, as well as information regarding legal guidelines and payment issues regarding advanced midwifery practice procedures. Midwives who wish to consider expanding their practice to include vacuum assisted birth should be aware of the following:

ACNM Handbook: Vacuum Assisted Birth in Midwifery Practice

Midwives considering expanding their practice to include vacuum extraction should obtain the ACNM handbook on this topic from our Clinical Issues Series, *Vacuum Assisted Birth in Midwifery Practice*. The handbook addresses each step in the *Guidelines for the Incorporation of New Procedures into Nurse-Midwifery Practice* with regard to incorporation of vacuum extraction. Where material about vacuum extraction is universally applicable, that material is provided. Where individual midwives must document what is specific to their practice setting and the process they followed, space is provided to do so. Once completed, the handbook can be kept in the midwife’s professional files as documentation that practice has been expanded in accordance with the *Guidelines*. The handbook is available for purchase from the ACNM Resource Catalog and the ACNM Online Store at www.shopacnm.com.

FDA Public Health Advisory

In May, 1998, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published a public health advisory, “Need for CAUTION when using vacuum assisted delivery devices,” highlighting complications associated with the use of vacuum devices and recommendations for their use. Midwives should be aware that the Safe Medical Devices Act of 1990 (SMDA), requires hospitals to report injuries and deaths associated with the use of medical devices, including vacuum assisted delivery devices. Information on this act, and other information on medical device reporting can be found at <http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/mdr/mdr-general.html>. The SMDA was also published in the *Journal of Nurse-Midwifery*, Vol. 44, No. 6, November/December 1999.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) Committee on Obstetric Practice responded to the FDA Advisory with a Committee Opinion (Number 208, Sept. 1998), *Delivery by Vacuum Extraction*. The opinion recognized the need for those clinicians using the devices to be appropriately trained and familiar with the indications and contraindications, while strongly recommending its continued use in appropriate clinical settings.

Medicolegal Concerns

Midwives who choose to expand their practice to include vacuum devices should be aware of the common allegations in lawsuits related to their use. In March 1999, *OBG Management* published an article entitled “Cutting your legal risks with vacuum-assisted deliveries.” Reprints are available free of charge from Prism by calling 800-648-9822. *OBG Management* also published, in August 1996, an “Expert Exchange” with James A. Bofill, “Refining and expanding the use of vacuum extraction.”

Continuing Education

Vacuum assisted birth has been the topic of workshops at the ACNM Annual Meeting. Information on our upcoming Annual Meeting and other educational offerings are always available on the ACNM Web site at www.midwife.org. Audiotapes of workshops and educational sessions presented at the ACNM Annual Meeting are available from Sound Images, Inc. “Assisting Deliveries with Vacuum Extractors,” recorded at

the 47th Annual Meeting & Exhibit in Atlanta Georgia on May 25, 2002, is available from Sound Images at 303-649-1811; or www.soundimages.net. The session is 02-WK9.

Vacuum extraction is a skill included in the Advanced Life Support in Obstetrics (ALSO) course offered by the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP). Information on this course can be found at www.aafp.org/also, or contact AAFP at 800-274-2237; ext. 6550.

Selected References

1. Johnson P, Pace S. Guide to the use of the vacuum extractor by nurse-midwives. *J Nurse Midwifery* 1993; 38:88S-94S.
2. Towner D, Castro MA, Eby-Wilkens E, Gilbert WM. Effect of mode of delivery in nulliparous women on neonatal intracranial injury [see comments]. *N Engl J Med* 1999; 341:1709-1714.
3. Bofill JA, Rust OA, Devidas M, Roberts WE, Morrison JC, Martin JN, Jr. Neonatal cephalohematoma from vacuum extraction. *J Reprod Med* 1997; 42:565-569.
4. Bofill JA, Rust OA, Schorr SJ, Brown RC, Roberts WE, Morrison JC. A randomized trial of two vacuum extraction techniques. *Obstet Gynecol* 1997; 89:758-762.
5. Vacca A. *Handbook of Vacuum Extraction in Obstetric Practice*. Brisbane: Vacca Research, 1997.
6. Charles C. Practising as a midwife ventouse practitioner in an isolated midwife-led unit setting. *MIDIRS Midwifery Digest* 2002; 12:75-77.

The ACNM "*QuickInfo*" series was developed by the Department of Professional Services to respond to common inquiries, summarizing ACNM resources regarding a particular topic, as well as listing selected literature and a variety of other resources. Your feedback is welcomed; contact Professional Services at 240-485-1800 or info@acnm.org 4/27/2001

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