



by **Eunice K. M. Ernst, CNM, MPH, DSc(Hon), FACNM, ACNM President**

High Touch Times

A “tea party” indeed it was! The ACNM chapters in Massachusetts put out the royal red carpet for the 2008 gathering of midwives! The Women’s Health Expo was a huge undertaking, but a great success. The program was described as one of the best ever. The students were there in full force and were a great addition to the opening ceremonies and the events that followed. The success belongs to so many: the National and Local Program Committees, national office staff, the Board of Directors, all who planned and contributed to the program, all who attended, and all who stayed behind in the ACNM office to provide continuity of ACNM services. Truly, “Together we can do so much.”

Then it was off to Glasgow, Scotland for the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) 28th Triennial Congress, where over 3000 midwives from around the world gathered to share information and experiences. I hope you have visited the ICM Web site (www.internationalmidwives.org) to get a sense of the camaraderie and community building that took place during that event. The plenary speakers and the program were extraordinary. The need for midwifery care around the world was almost overwhelming. For me, it affirmed the importance of expanding our global efforts and stepping

up our commitment to educate many more midwives to meet the challenges of this need. To do this we must first greatly expand our efforts here in the US. And that brings me home to address the challenges we face here.

Change is never easy. I recall John Naisbitt telling us in 1980 in his first book, *Megatrends*, that the information age and new technology would bring changes of which we could not even dream. (When I arrived home from

that birth and death are at least as spiritual as they are clinical...” and that “...for decades, Americans have turned over two of life’s most spiritual experiences, birth and death, to clinicians...” in an effort to avoid human suffering and death.

These passages provide food for thought in light of the challenge being placed before us today from the American Medical Association by their resolutions on homebirth and efforts to control who is qualified to provide care or be called “doctor.” However, the resolutions present only a clinical opinion ignoring the “accelerated search for meaning” of the birth experience by a growing number of women and families and their desire to be cared for by a midwife. This is understandable when one recognizes the extraordinary investment physicians have to make to achieve their high-tech clinical competence. What has been missing in the US is the high touch of midwifery care that Naisbitt cited in *Megatrends*. Therefore, the challenge to all of us as midwives is not to criticize or ignore the clinical perspective but rather to get on with producing the midwives to provide the high touch and spiritual balance to the high-tech delivery of services to women and childbearing families.

I hope that when we have our annual meeting with the leadership of ACOG we can accelerate working together continually to this end by tackling the problems all providers of services to women and childbearing families face in this rapidly changing information age. It is to this end that the entire convention stood to show their commitment to achieving these goals. We CAN do it. We DO know how to do it. **Q**

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Scotland to almost 1000 e-mails, I understood what he meant.) He even mentioned that midwives and birth centers would be needed to balance the use of this technology in medicine. In his 1999 book, *High Tech High Touch: Technology and our Accelerated Search for Meaning*, in a discussion of human suffering, he stated “...our own personal lives are set within a context of an everlasting universe,

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