



POSITION STATEMENT

CREATING A CULTURE OF SAFETY IN MIDWIFERY CARE

Midwives play an important role in applying principles of patient safety in the care they provide to decrease errors in the health care system. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) have noted common errors in health care that place patients at risk for adverse events at the hands of health care workers. Adverse outcomes in perinatal health care result in significant emotional and financial costs for all. The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) endorses the following principles to promote patient safety and decrease the risk of adverse outcomes to mothers and babies in labor and birth.

- **Principle #1: Care should be based on scientific knowledge about best practice.**
ACNM strongly supports the use of evidence-based practice, professional standards and guidelines, and the identification of best practices in the design of care processes as the foundation of care. Evidence-based practice is the integration of best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values. Syntheses of the evidence base and the development of practice guidelines should contribute to more valid and meaningful quality measures.
- **Principle #2: Interdisciplinary team communication is a fundamental aspect of patient care.**
Communication errors currently account for the majority of preventable adverse outcomes in perinatal care. ACNM encourages all midwives to strive to promote the development and implementation of strategies that foster open, effective, and ongoing communication between all team members. This includes the use of standard abbreviations and nomenclature. A formal mechanism should be established for transfer of care between providers.
- **Principle #3: Active involvement of patients and their families in care contributes to safe practice.**
ACNM recognizes and values the importance of including patients and their families as informed and active team participants in the care process, and considers this an imperative to the promotion of safe outcomes.
- **Principle #4: Participation in quality management programs increases safety.**
ACNM encourages midwives to participate in quality management programs to effectively evaluate and continuously improve ongoing clinical practice. Strategies that improve the quality of care include, but are not limited to, measurement of outcomes and process, analysis of sentinel events, and use of root cause analysis.

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ACNM recognizes that clinical practices and models of care may vary according to patient needs and values, and that healthcare can be safely and effectively delivered through a variety of practice models. The safety principles acknowledged in this statement transcend such variances in practice and set forth common principles for midwives to follow in an ongoing commitment to safe and effective care. ACNM recommends that all midwives incorporate these safety principles into their practices in an effort to reduce error and optimize healthy outcomes for the families they serve. Furthermore, midwives are expected to keep abreast of developments in the field of quality improvement research and policy in order to continuously evaluate and improve the quality of care they provide.

Bibliography

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