



International Confederation of Midwives

PRESS RELEASE

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Midwives and women 'sailing the high seas of information'

Without the knowledge gained from midwifery research, midwives and women would be 'like a lifeboat adrift in turbulent seas ... running the risk of being submerged in the huge waves of information'. This vivid picture, painted by Zimbabwean midwife Nester Tirimunhano Moyo, launched an in-depth look at the place of research in midwifery – particularly in relation to the theme of the Congress 'Midwives and women together for the family of the world'.

Nester gave a keynote speech on research to 2,000 midwives from 80 countries who are attending the 26th Triennial Congress of the International Confederation of Midwives. She first examined the concepts of 'family' and the woman's role in family, community and society. She concluded that women make a major contribution to the community and to propagating change for the benefit of the family of the world. Their function in disseminating the findings of research is crucial.

Midwives for their part contribute services and care that optimise the potential of women to play key roles in family and society. Together they produce a 'stable, economically and psychologically healthy family of the world where change is well managed and does not leave casualties in its wake'.

Research enables midwives to break out of social, cultural and political restrictions. For example the knowledge emerging about violence in the family was previously not accessed because midwives believed it was not acceptable to ask women: research revealed that women did find it acceptable and that midwives, with their skills of listening to women, were the best people to do so.

Research generates new knowledge which midwives may critique, understand and build into policy, education and practice. In the course of this process, research will also have the indirect effects of unifying midwives – helping them to identify common ground, and encouraging them to develop as leaders.

Midwives should aim to create a 'fair information environment' where evidence-based information is conveyed to women for the benefit of the family of the world.

The ICM is a Confederation of 83 national midwifery associations from 70 countries, founded in 1919. It aims to 'advance world-wide the aims and aspirations of midwives in the attainment of improved outcomes for women in their childbearing years, their newborn and their families wherever they reside'.

Major international congresses are held every three years. The 26th Congress currently taking place in Vienna, Austria, includes over 750 presentations. Keynote speeches are given by leading midwives from every region of the world.

For further information contact ICM headquarters or visit the website www.internationalmidwives.org