



International Confederation of Midwives

PRESS RELEASE

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Midwives will support mothers with HIV infection in exclusive breastfeeding of their babies where that is the woman's choice

Delegates to the ICM Council meeting in Vienna, where 60 national midwifery associations from 50 countries are represented, have agreed a position statement on the subject of infant feeding when the mother has been diagnosed as HIV positive.

A number of research studies carried out over the past two years were cited, the findings from which have indicated that **to achieve a minimum risk of transmission of the virus, babies should be fed exclusively either by breastfeeding or by a reliable artificial method**. The position statement, proposed by the Midwives' Society of the Royal College of Nursing and seconded by the Norwegian Association of Midwives, acknowledges the difficulty in some circumstances of finding a safe method of artificial feeding and 'urges the gathering of experience and its dissemination to support midwives [and] policy-makers ... in achieving the above-mentioned options'.

Midwives joining the discussion included those from the Koninklijke Nederlandse Organisatie van Verloskundigen (Royal Dutch Organisation of Midwives) who felt that, in developed countries, using a reliable method of artificial feeding has a lower risk of mother-to-baby transmission.

A responder from the Gambia Midwives' Association said that she understood there was evidence showing that exclusive breastfeeding and bottle-feeding carried the same risk of transmission to the baby up to at least three months of age.

The Iran Midwifery Population's representative stated their association's support for the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding by HIV-positive mothers in developing countries.

REFERENCES

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This ICM Council meeting precedes the 26th Triennial Congress (April 14-18) when 2,500 midwives will gather in Vienna to participate in a diverse and multilingual programme of lectures, workshops, poster sessions and other presentations.

The ICM is a Confederation of 83 national midwifery associations, founded in 1919, and 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'.

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