



# International Confederation of Midwives

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Midwives at ICM Council support promotion of vaginal birth rather than Caesarean section (CS)**

A proposal for a new position statement relating to the benefits of vaginal birth as opposed to operative delivery has been made to ICM Council by the Midwives' Society of the Royal College of Nursing (UK), supported by the Österreichisches Hebammengremium (Austrian Midwives' Association). The delegates from 60 midwifery associations in 50 countries agreed to endorse the statement that:

**ICM deplores the use of Caesarean section for women other than when evidence-based clinical criteria are met ... and will:**

- **support member associations in their efforts to influence the unnecessary use of Caesarean section on a national level**
- **encourage midwives to be proactive as advocates for individual women**
- **work with medical colleagues to encourage appropriate use of the intervention'**

The debate included strong support from the Hellenic Midwives Association whose representative told Council members that rates of Caesarean births are now approaching 45% in Greece. Greek midwives have made a representation to the Ministry of Health requesting that a protocol be established for decision-making on operative or vaginal birth. However, this has not yet met with a favourable response.

A speaker from the Midwives' Alliance of North America said that governments needed to be educated by midwives about the increased levels of maternal mortality and morbidity associated with excessive CS rates. In the USA, as in most countries, accurate data on maternal mortality and morbidity are difficult to achieve.

Midwives from Iran joined the debate with a plea that hospitals should aim to become more 'mother-friendly' and 'baby-friendly' with a view to reducing the medical domination of maternity services and the consequent high levels of intervention.

The proposal from the UK and Austrian midwives included a guiding statement for member associations, which encouraged the adoption of 'evidence-based criteria and standards for performance of CS that are appropriate to the socio-cultural context and result in maximum health gain for women and babies'. Associations are also urged to support midwives in their health counselling and advocacy roles.

This ICM Council meeting precedes the 26<sup>th</sup> 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'.

*For further information contact ICM headquarters or visit the website [www.internationalmidwives.org](http://www.internationalmidwives.org)*