



Media release

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Midwifery System Hailed as World Leader

New Zealand midwives provide the best care in the world for mothers and newborn babies.

That's how international delegates attending a major international conference on midwifery and maternity care have described New Zealand's midwifery led maternity model of care.

They acknowledged that New Zealand is leading the world in setting the standards for midwifery practice and professionalism, citing midwifery education, regulation and training, and strong collaboration with other health professionals.

The State of the World's Midwifery report, published by 29 leading world health agencies was launched at the conference. The report highlighted "midwifery services as the focus of global efforts to realise the best possible care during pregnancy and childbirth for every woman and her newborn".

In the report, UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon said "bold steps" need to be taken by governments to ensure midwifery is supported globally to ensure better outcomes for all mothers and babies.

New Zealand is alone in achieving a high level of access to midwives for all women and their babies.

The focus of the more than 3000 participants attending the 29th Triennial Congress of the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) in South Africa was to further develop strategies to reduce maternal and infant mortality by strengthening midwifery worldwide.

The consensus world wide is that an educated well supported midwifery workforce will improve outcomes for mothers and babies.

To work towards these goals, the ICM adopted:

- new global standards for midwifery education and regulation

- a set of essential basic competencies for midwifery practice
- a tool for strengthening midwifery associations

It was noted that New Zealand is the only country that already conforms 100% to these new standards and competencies, and delegates from many countries are looking to us to help them with implementing similar models of midwifery care.

Several international agencies including the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organisation and the International Federation of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians pledged to support the implementation of the ICM standards.

New Zealand College of Midwives (NZCOM) chief executive officer, Karen Guilliland, who has just returned from the ICM Congress says: “New Zealand’s midwifery profession already meets all the requirements of this international standard and was noted in a number of addresses as the model for other nations to aspire to.”

The ICM strategy for tackling maternal and infant mortality worldwide by strengthening midwifery is built upon three pillars for provision of quality midwifery workforces; education, regulation and professional associations.

Karen Guilliland says that New Zealand midwives become degree qualified through three-year (equivalent to four years, as each academic year is 47 weeks long) Bachelor of Midwifery programmes. They are professionally accountable as they are regulated by the Midwifery Council, set up under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act of 2003.

“The NZCOM is New Zealand’s professional organisation for midwives and we provide ongoing educational development for midwives after they are registered. We also promote ‘Standards of Practice’ through a variety of mechanisms including the Midwifery Standards Review process,” she says.

“We can be proud of our maternity system in New Zealand,” says Ms Guilliland. “The international endorsement of the very model we follow and the fact that the world is looking to New Zealand as an example of high professional standards delivering the very best for women and children should make us all feel proud and positive about our woman centred midwifery and maternity services”, she says

More information:

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Reference; The State of the Worlds Midwifery Report 2011; Delivering Health, Saving Lives. UNFPA, New York; www.stateoftheworldsmidwifery.com

www.internationalmidwives.com

