

To: Time Magazine and Dr. Amy Tuteur
From: The Midwives Alliance of North America
Date: November 21, 2011



The following letter is in response to the following statement by Dr. Amy Tuteur published in Time.com on November 7, 2011 (“What Ricki Lake Doesn’t Tell You About Home-birth”).

The article stated:

“The Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA), the organization that represents home birth midwives, won’t release their own death rates. While collecting data on 23,000 midwife-attended, planned home births, MANA informed their members that the data would be used to prove the safety of American home birth. Once the data was analyzed, however they declined to release it. They have publicly offered the data to those who can prove they will use it for the “advancement of midwifery,” and sign an agreement promising not to release the death rates to the American public. This is a glaring red flag.”

We would like to address a number of untrue facts and inconsistencies in Dr. Tuteur’s statement:

1. “*The Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA), the organization that represents home birth midwives...*”: The Midwives Alliance does not represent home birth midwives. It is the only professional organization uniting and representing all North American midwives, inclusive of all midwifery educational backgrounds and practice styles. This also includes birth center and hospital based midwives.
2. “*...won’t release their own death rates*”: As a professional service to our members, the Midwives Alliance Division of Research compiles nationwide benchmarking statistics from the MANA Stats database for member midwives to use in comparing their own practice outcomes to those of midwives across the country. The data in the MANA Stats database is accessible to researchers who are interested in conducting studies on the outcomes and practices associated with midwife-attended births. The Midwives Alliance invites researchers to apply for access. The application form and further details can be found at <http://mana.org/DOR>.

3. *“While collecting data on 23,000 midwife-attended, planned home births...”*: To date, the MANA Stats database has over 24,000 records in our 2004 to 2009 dataset, plus over 15,000 records completed or in progress in our second dataset (2009 to 2011). This amounts to 39,000 records. About 800 records are completed monthly via our state of the art Web collection system.
4. *“Once the data was analyzed, however they declined to release it”*: The primary mission of the Division of Research is to collect high-quality data for other researchers to use, and we welcome applications. The Division of Research has recently developed mechanisms for public, annual reporting of benchmarking statistics.
5. *“They have publicly offered the data to those who can prove they will use it for the “advancement of midwifery,” and sign an agreement promising not to release the death rates to the American public”*: Our dataset is currently available to researchers, and we welcome applications. The research handbook, application materials, and further information is available

online at <http://mana.org/DOR>. There is no stipulation that data must be used for the advancement of midwifery nor is there an agreement promising not to release death rates; this statement is completely false. The Data Access Policy is careful and fair, allowing qualified researchers to study our data when their research questions match the kind of information we collect. This is the way large databases are usually managed.

Many peer reviewed articles have shown that planned homebirth with a skilled attendant is safe and involves fewer interventions and lower surgery rates than planned hospital birth with equal mortality rates. The Division of Research enables transformative research that can be used to evaluate and continually improve midwifery care.

We demand an immediate retraction or errata of false statements published in Time regarding our state of the art database and Division of Research.

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