One of a Kind Social Media Campaign Educating Expectant Mothers About Midwifery Care to be Released

Comprehensive Look at Midwives Marks International Day of the Midwife, May 5

Washington, DC. An innovative online campaign designed specifically to educate women about midwifery as a high quality maternity care option will be released on May 5th, International Day of the Midwife. The educational campaign called I am a Midwife is the most comprehensive and easily accessible tool available online for women seeking information about midwifery. I am a Midwife campaign is a free series of eight 10-minute videos designed to answer a woman’s questions about how engaging the services of a midwife can achieve the kind of pregnancy and birth experience that most fits her values, culture, preferences and needs. The video series explores the benefits of midwifery care and the full range of services a midwife provides.

“As a culture, much of what we believe about pregnancy and birth is shaped, or warped, by the never-ending barrage of words and images we receive through the media,” says Geradine Simkins, midwife and President of the Midwives Alliance of North America. “Our goal is to build the case for women to view pregnancy, labor, and birth as normal physiologic processes, and invite women to consider seeking care from a midwife.” The free video series will be available on You Tube, at the Midwives Alliance of North America’s website, the Mothers Naturally website, and will be widely disseminated using social media with the goal of reaching a broad base of women of childbearing age. One 10-minute video with a particular theme will be released each Friday for the next eight weeks.

“Typically, women in the U.S are given only one option—a one size fits all maternity care system when they really deserve an option that offers the individualized and personalized care that midwives provide,” says Simkins, project co-creator. The video series was designed by the Midwives Alliance in response to the challenges and frustrations women face in navigating the complexities of the U.S. maternity care system. The campaign also raises the question about why most industrialized nations have an integrated maternity care system that includes midwives and physicians working collaboratively, while in the U.S. only ten percent of all births are midwife-led.
I am a Midwife offers a unique look at more than 40 real-life midwives and the work they do across the country providing care to women of all races and socioeconomic levels, in all childbirth settings including hospitals, birth centers and women’s homes. I am a Midwife describes why midwifery care is safe, satisfying, reduces disparities, decreases costs, and increases better outcomes for mothers and their newborns.

The I am a Midwife campaign comes at a time when the challenges of the United States maternity care system have been under scrutiny. According to a [2011 update](#) to the landmark Amnesty International report, the U.S. spends more on maternal health care than any other country yet ranks behind 49 other developed nations in maternal mortality, and behind 45 other nations in infant mortality. And the noteworthy statistics are worse for women of color, and marginalized and vulnerable women of all races and ethnicities. Midwives in the U.S have proven to provide better care and better health for women and infants at lower costs for taxpayers and private insurers.

“Midwives deliver care for low-risk women safely, with higher levels of maternal satisfaction and at lower cost,” said Tamara Taitt, a Certified Professional Midwife, co-creator of the project, and board member of the Midwives Alliance. “We want to provide a much-needed look at midwifery care, particularly because the media is dominated by pervasive messages that both emphasize and normalize the high level of interventions and cesarean deliveries in the current medical model of childbirth.”

Through I am a Midwife, the Midwives Alliance is seeking to change the discourse about childbirth in America from a focus on fear to one of empowerment. Filmmaker for the video series, Nicolle Littrell says, “Not only do we aim to help educate the wider public about who midwives are and what they do, but also harness the power of social networks to create social change.”

The Midwives Alliance is a professional organization for all midwives, recognizing the diversity of educational backgrounds and practice styles within the profession. MANA's goal is to unify and strengthen the profession of midwifery, thereby improving the quality of health care for women, babies, and communities.

I am a Midwife is funded by a grant from “The Birth Trust,” a fund of the Foundation for the Advancement of Midwifery.

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I am a Midwife Public Education Campaign

Project Description

I am a Midwife is a series of short, edgy, informative interviews profiling midwives across the country. The campaign will launch on May 5, International Day of the Midwife, will appear on the Midwives Alliance YouTube Channel, and be promoted through a variety of social media platforms.

Purpose of the Project

Over the course of the last twenty to thirty years, having a baby in the United States has become a technology-ridden event, rampant with testing, intervention and surgery. “Normal” has come to refer less to the natural physiological process of birth and more to what is considered commonplace in American obstetrical practices. There is ample reliable evidence here and abroad to indicate that midwives are capable of providing the gold standard in maternity care. In fact, in most Western countries midwives do just that. However in the U.S., the general public is only vaguely aware of what midwives do, who they are, where to find them, what settings their maternity care services are provided, and how to evaluate those services. According to the Listening to Mothers surveys (2002, 2006, 2008), over the past decade increasing numbers of women of reproductive age obtain information about pregnancy and childbirth online. They use various social media to engage in communication, relationship-building and information-gathering.

We believe women make responsible well-considered reproductive health choices when they have access to evidence-based information. If the primary place women go to find information is the Internet then that is where we must be prepared to engage them. Social media is a powerful tool for public education. Social networks allow two-way conversations in which the Midwives Alliance can not only educate the public, but also listen to their needs, motivations and desires. This listening allows for more effective future engagement, which is the foundation of a robust and effective public education campaign. The Midwives Alliance intends to meet women where they are, harness the power of social media and thereby create social change. Given the current climate surrounding childbirth in America there is no better time than now to change the cultural discourse around birth and midwifery.

Video Interviews of Midwives

I am A Midwife campaign will provide a glimpse into the lives of everyday midwives and will answer questions about who a midwife is and what s/he does by profiling the diversity of midwives practicing in all settings—urban, rural and tribal areas, hospitals, birth centers, homes, and academia. By focusing on midwives in different communities and using social networking tools, we will raise public awareness about midwifery care, with the ultimate goal of increasing access to midwives. Our goal is to build the case for women to view pregnancy, labor, and birth as normal, natural processes, and encourage women to seek care from a midwife, and ultimately to improve birth outcomes in the U.S.
Project Leadership

Project Innovators
Geradine Simkins, CNM, MSN is a midwife, President of the Midwives Alliance and Interim Executive Director, and co-creator of the I am a Midwife public education campaign. Geradine is a writer, activist, and visionary with over thirty years experience working in maternal and child healthcare, women’s healthcare, and with community-based programs. She is the owner of Birthways Consulting in Traverse City, Michigan and has worked as a maternal and child health consultant, program designer and educator for organizations that serve American Indian communities regionally and nationally. Geradine is the editor of a new book entitled Into These Hands, Wisdom From Midwives (2011.)

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Tamara Taitt, CPM, MS, MFTI, PhDc is a midwife, marriage and family therapist, board member of the Midwives Alliance and co-creator of the I am a Midwife public education campaign. Tamara has been working in Maternal, Infant and Child Health for the last five years focusing on perinatal health disparities and perinatal bereavement. Tamara has a keen interest in birth politics and advocacy, the sustainability of the midwifery profession and woman's reproductive health issues. Tamara is currently project manager of the Midwives Alliance Public Education Campaign. Tamara lives in Miami, Florida.

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Filmmaker
Nicolle Littrell, MA, is an independent broadcast media professional. She is a documentary filmmaker, educator, activist and producer/director at Woman in the Moon Films. Here recent project, "At Home in Maine," is an online film series about Maine's homebirth and midwifery community: www.mainehomebirth.wordpress.com. Nicolle is the filmmaker for the I am a Midwife educational series.

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“Being a midwife is building relationships with women, building trust with women and helping them connect with their own knowing about birth and about giving birth.”

“I think Midwives are the best kept secret in this country. We are the experts in normal birth.”

“Midwifery is care that marries the science with the art and with time.”

“Women know; we’ve said that for years.”

“The way we know to care for ourselves as women is priceless and timeless.”

“Being a midwife is one that brings you to the door of revolution and allows you to walk through that door and be a revolutionary, one by one, changing birth, changing the community, one baby, one family at a time.”

“Every community should have its own midwife.”

“We are student midwives!”

For more information, visit us at:
- www.mana.org/IAAM
- www.youtube.com/iamamidwife
- www.twitter.com/manacommunity
- https://www.facebook.com/MidwivesAlliance

photo credit, Nicolle Littrell, Filmmaker, Woman in the Moon Films
Organizational Overview

The Midwives Alliance History, Vision, and Values

For three decades the Midwives Alliance has advocated a maternity care model that empowers women to take charge of their reproductive health and ensures optimal outcomes for mothers and babies.

As we prepare to celebrate our 30th anniversary in 2012, the Midwives Alliance has a proud history of relentlessly advocating for women’s autonomy in their reproductive lives through promoting midwifery as a high-quality maternity care option.

Mission
The Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA) is a professional membership organization that promotes excellence in midwifery, endorses diversity in educational backgrounds and practice styles, and is dedicated to unifying and strengthening the profession, thereby increasing access to quality health care and improving outcomes for women, babies, and families.

Vision and Values
As an organization dedicated to high quality, empowering, women-centered maternity care as exemplified by the midwifery model of care, the Midwives Alliance...

- Envisions a world in which all stakeholders are engaged in activities and institute policies that address the needs of women and families across the lifespan
- Envisions transforming the health care system using a social justice framework so all people can experience the benefits of the system
- Envisions a maternity care system in which both providers of care and those receiving care feel respected, satisfied, and valued
- Envisions a maternity care system that offers high quality, accessible, affordable, and culturally competent care for all clients and patients
- Envisions a maternity care system with a diverse multidisciplinary team of health care professionals working in collaboration to promote health and wellness for all women, newborns, and families
- Values each woman’s autonomy in making informed choices that affect her body, pregnancy, labor, birth, and parenting style, and that utilizes shared decision making between women and their healthcare providers
- Values inclusion of diverse voices and interconnectedness as key principles in organizational structure and function

The Midwives Alliance promotes professional development and continuing education of midwives so all women and babies will have access to practitioners who can provide excellent prenatal care, safe and empowering births, and privacy during the critically important bonding period of mother-infant attachment.
Midwifery in the United States: Fact Sheet

Crises of maternity care spending and poor maternal-infant health outcomes in the U.S.

- The United States spends more than any other nation on health care, using almost half of all of the world’s health care dollars
- $98 billion of health care spending in the U.S. goes towards the provision of maternity care
- Despite large spending, the U.S. currently ranks 50th in the world for maternal mortality and 46th for infant mortality occurring during the first year of life

Midwifery care leads to improved health outcomes and cost-savings

- Studies consistently demonstrate reduced maternal morbidity, equivalent perinatal mortality, decreased technological intervention at birth, enormous cost savings, and high client satisfaction rates associated with midwifery care

Improving maternal-child health outcomes: a comparison

- Current U.S. cesarean rate is 32.8%
  - Midwifery cesarean rates range on average from 2.3% – 6.4%
- Current. U.S. prematurity rate is 11.99%
  - Midwifery prematurity rates range on average from 1.4% to 1.7%
- Current. U.S. low birth weight (<2500 grams) rate is 8.5%
  - Midwifery low birth weight rates range on average from 0.8% to 1.1%
- Low birth weight and prematurity are the two leading factors in infant mortality
- Significant health disparities exist in the U.S. among racial/ethnic minorities, low socioeconomic families, and other marginalized populations
  - Midwifery care can has demonstrated potential in improving health outcomes for vulnerable and disenfranchised populations

Public health organizations recognize and support midwifery care for low-risk women, including:

- American Public Health Association
- World Health Organization
- American College of Nurse Midwives
- National Perinatal Association
The Midwives Model of Care™

- The Midwives Model of Care is based on the fact that pregnancy and birth are normal life processes.
- The Midwives Model of Care includes:
  - Monitoring the physical, psychological, and social well-being of the mother throughout the childbearing cycle
  - Providing the mother with individualized education, counseling, and prenatal care, continuous hands-on assistance during labor and delivery, and postpartum support
  - Minimizing technological interventions
  - Identifying and referring women who require obstetrical attention

The application of this woman-centered model of care has been proven to reduce the incidence of birth injury, trauma, and cesarean section.

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Homebirth Statistics

- Number of homebirths in the United States: 29,650 (0.72% of all births in the U.S.)
- Homebirth trends: 29% increase in homebirths from 2004 – 2009
- Highest Rates of Homebirth by State: Montana (2.55%); Oregon (1.96%); Vermont (1.91%)
- Homebirths by Attendant Type: Direct-entry Midwives (42.9%); Certified Nurse Midwives (19.5%); Physicians (4.9%); Other Attendant (32.9%)
- Low Risk Profile for Homebirths: Preterm delivery (5.8%); Low Birth Weight (4.2%); Multiple deliveries (0.9%)

References


The Midwives Alliance Strategic Plan builds on past successes and ventures into bold new directions.

The Midwives Alliance Strategic Plan emerged from membership input and the knowledge, skills, and wisdom of thirteen expert Board Members who collectively hold over 250 years of experience in the areas of midwifery, women’s health service provision, public health and education, social justice, and health policy reform. Our Strategic Plan provides the architecture and road map for achieving our vision, articulates key goals, and identifies specific initiatives and projects.

Strategic Goals for the Next Five Years (2011-2015)

Goal 1: Prioritizing a Social Justice Agenda  
...to ensure that all women have access to excellent care throughout their reproductive lives and equity in achieving perinatal outcomes.

Goal 2: Engaging in Political Advocacy  
...to ensure that women have access to highly skilled midwives who are able to interface with the maternity care system and are adequately compensated for their services.

Goal 3: Strengthening Organizational Capacity  
...to fortify MANA’s foundation in order to fulfill our mission in an effective manner and support the professional development of our members as they serve diverse communities of childbearing women.

Goal 4: Increasing Public Awareness and Education  
...to highlight women’s reproductive needs and how midwifery can meet those needs.

The success of the strategic plan depends on our greatest asset— involvement of our members. When the Midwives Alliance’s members combine their talents, ideas, and expertise to achieve common visions and goals they are, and have been, an unstoppable force and a catalyst for change.

Our success also depends on opening our hearts and doors to greater diversity and a wider cross-section of midwives and midwifery supporters. In this way the needs for health, self-determination and dignity for all people— including underserved and marginalized populations and communities—are served. Our success in this realm will depend on cultivating a greater appreciation of the richness of differences and mutual responsibility for the health and well being of all of our mothers and children. Our strategic plan creates a framework for crafting innovative and inspiring solutions.