APPROPRIATE USE OF INTERVENTION IN CHILDBIRTH

BACKGROUND
Childbearing, for the great majority of women throughout the world, is a normal, physiological event, influenced by culture, traditions, religion and psychosocial factors. However, for many women in resource-poor nations, pregnancy and birth can be life-threatening and the risk of death or illness may be reduced through the use of evidence-based, technological interventions.

Birth is a normal, physiological process and is a family event that requires a health-oriented rather than a disease-oriented model of care.
In keeping with its *International Code of Ethics for Midwives*, the ICM recognises that women are active participants in decisions that affect their health. Making informed decisions about the use or non-use of technology in childbirth requires that women have up-to-date, complete and understandable information on the risks and benefits of each technological intervention proposed in their care.

POSITION
In keeping with the basic premise that childbirth is a normal, life-cycle event midwives will use technology only when indicated, to enhance the well-being of mothers and babies and to improve outcomes.

Therefore, the midwife will:
- provide information to women and their families that promotes the understanding of birth as a normal life process and enables women to make informed choices
- promote practices that enhance the normal physiological processes of pregnancy, labour and birth as well as the psychological, spiritual and cultural aspects
- advocate for the fair allocation of health resources that support the basic needs of women and their babies
- participate in the design and evaluation of interventions during childbirth, including the ethical use of technology, according to the following criteria:
  - when there is a clear and present danger to the health of mother or baby that
can be removed or minimised by using technology
  o when the benefits of its use outweigh the risks to mother or baby or both
  o when both the midwife and the woman/family fully understand how the technology
    works and why it is indicated
  o when the woman has been given complete and understandable information about the
    proposed technological intervention and can, therefore, make an informed decision

The midwife will also:
● take measures to avoid unnecessary interference in the progress of normal labour and birth
● understand and implement life-saving skills, including the use of technology, in a timely and
  appropriate manner

RECOMMENDATIONS
Member Associations are urged to use this statement to highlight the midwife's role in the use
and evaluation of any technological intervention during pregnancy and birth. The statement
also upholds a partnership with women as a model of care to maternity care provision

RELATED ICM DOCUMENTS
ICM Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice (2010)
ICM Philosophy and Model of Midwifery Care (2005)

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS
Childbirth Connection. Cascade of intervention in childbirth. (2011)
http://www.childbirthconnection.org/article.asp?ck=10182

Adopted at Brisbane International Council meeting, 2005
Reviewed and endorsed at Durban International Council meeting, 2011
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