POSITIVE ACTION TO REDUCE SMOKING AND PASSIVE SMOKING IN PREGNANCY

BACKGROUND
There is widespread concern regarding the increase in young female smokers and smoking pregnant women. Smoking harms many aspects and every phase of reproduction. Despite having greater increased knowledge of the adverse health effects of smoking during pregnancy, many pregnant women and girls continue to smoke. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that only 18% to 25% of women smokers quit smoking once they become pregnant. There are more specific risks from exposure to tobacco smoke affecting the health of infants, children in early life and women in pregnancy.

The International Code of Ethics for Midwives (2008) sets out midwives’ social responsibility for health promotion, stipulating that ‘midwives act as effective role models in health promotion for women throughout their life cycles, for families and for other health professionals’ and that ‘midwives participate in the development and implementation of health policies that promote the health of all women and child bearing families’. Collaborative efforts may bring positive outcomes: the sharing of experiences and activities among member associations has the potential for progress.

The consequences of smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke for the health of nations and individuals, especially pregnant women and babies, are of sufficient importance to justify a renewed and collaborative effort among member associations. Smoking and passive smoking concern the rights of the child to the avoidance of exposure to health-damaging influences, at the same time ICM recognises both the potential conflicts with the immediate wishes of the mother, her right to choices in lifestyle and the socio-psychological and biological influences on the imperative to smoke. Health professionals and
community members have the responsibility to initiate actions for reducing tobacco-related health risks to women and children in particular.

POSITION
The ICM deplores the continuing negative impact on women’s and babies’ health caused by the smoking of tobacco. ICM supports the efforts of midwives to make a difference to the long-term health of the people of their nations through actively addressing issues surrounding smoking.

ICM will:
- Co-operate with WHO and other international health organisations to combat the epidemic of tobacco use
- Lobby international governmental and non-governmental organisations actively to address the issue of smoking
- Encourage its member associations in various countries to tackle the issue of smoking and support anti-smoking campaigns and programme development.
- Promote research into tobacco use among childbearing women with the aim of developing evidence-based strategies directed at women during the preconception, pregnancy and perinatal periods

RECOMMENDATIONS
The ICM urges its member associations to:
- Declare their commitment to addressing the problem of tobacco smoking and to supporting inter-professional national efforts and the international sharing of knowledge
- Share experiences among member associations of the effectiveness of various local and national approaches
- Explore the potential for collaborative working between member associations
- Articulate the support they require from ICM headquarters
- Build up the competence of midwives in smoking cessation counselling
- Support smoking cessation among midwives, so as to protect their own health and help them be more appropriate role models in health issues
RELATED ICM DOCUMENTS

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS
Kobe Declaration (WHO, November 1999)
Royal College of Nursing and Health Education Authority (1999). Clearing the Air, a Nurse’s Guide to smoking and Tobacco Control. London, UK: RCN/HEA.

Adopted at Vienna International Council meeting, 2002
Revised and adopted at Durban International Council meeting, 2011
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