Position Statement

Midwives’ Provision of Abortion-Related Services

Background
Unsafe abortion is one of the five major causes of maternal mortality. Global, regional and national agencies have set goals and guidance for reducing high maternal mortality in general and abortion-related maternal mortality and morbidity in particular. Governments agree that ‘[…] in circumstances where abortion is not against the law health systems should train and equip health providers to provide safe services […]’. Reports indicate that globally, 94% of women live in countries where abortion is legally permitted for one or more indications. Evidence demonstrates that access to safe abortion-related services can almost eliminate maternal deaths due to unsafe abortion. Recent global guidance includes abortion care as an essential element of basic reproductive health services and a means of reducing maternal mortality and morbidity.

Realising that authorised and well-educated midwives can provide competent and safe abortion-related services many governments have modified their laws and policies to empower midwives to provide comprehensive abortion services. In some parts of the world maternal mortality rates are at critical levels. Abortion related mortality can be 60 times higher in low versus high resource countries.

Position
ICM affirms that a woman who seeks or requires abortion-related services is entitled to be provided with such services by midwives.

In keeping with the above midwives should:

- Consider such care to be within the role of the midwife as defined by the laws and policies of his/her country
- Recognise the woman’s right to decide for herself and provide information, counselling and services according to the woman’s needs
- Refer the woman as appropriate for any further treatment that may be required and that is beyond the scope of midwifery practice
• Provide the woman (and where appropriate her family) with education concerning her future health, including contraception and planning for future pregnancy
• Recognise the emotional, psychological and social support which may be needed by the woman and respond appropriately.

The education of midwives should prepare them for their role in providing abortion-related services that ensure safety and wellbeing for the woman.

Recommendations
Member Associations are urged to seek to influence the education of midwives to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to provide abortion-related services in line with the ICM Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice (2010).

Related ICM Documents

Other Relevant Documents
PMNCH. 2011. Essential interventions, commodities and guidelines for reproductive,


Adopted at Glasgow Council meeting, 2008

Reviewed and adopted at Prague Council meeting, 2014

Due for next review 2020

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1 As defined by WHO 2014 (Ganatra, B. “From Concept to Measurement: Operationalizing WHO’s Definition of Unsafe Abortion” Bulletin of World Health Organization 2014;92:155)


