

*Position Statement*

# Care of the Newborn

**PS2011\_005 ENG**

## Background

The care of the newborn is an integral part of the role of the midwife as defined in the International Definition and Scope of Practice of the Midwife and the ICM Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice. The WHO (1) estimates that 2.7 million neonatal deaths and 2.6 million stillbirths occur each year. Most of these deaths happen within the first 24 hours of birth, and the causes are usually preventable. The UN Sustainable Development Goals have set targets to end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births, by 2030 (2).

Studies have shown that many newborns' lives could be saved (3) if they and their mother are able to get quality care from a midwife or other skilled health professional whose training and skills meet international criteria, such as those set out in the ICM Professional Framework.

# Position

ICM underscores that the midwife is responsible for the health and wellbeing of the mother and her newborn that are under her care. The midwife must attain and maintain her knowledge and skills in accordance with the ICM Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice. This means that midwives provide high quality, comprehensive care for healthy newborns from birth to six weeks of age (4), including:

- Immediate care at birth, including full newborn examination,
- Newborn resuscitation,
- Early skin to skin and kangaroo mother care,
- General care of the newborn, including the detection and management of common conditions,
- Identification of complications and referral as appropriate,
- Nutrition, early establishment and continuation of breastfeeding, with family and community education to promote, protect and support breastfeeding.
- Providing counselling and follow-up care for women and family members who experience stillbirth, neonatal death, serious infant illness, and congenital conditions.
- Education of mothers and families in the prevention and management of diseases and other conditions,
- Providing information and provision of immunisation,
- Supporting the process of bonding and attachment between the mother and newborn,
- Advocating for mothers and newborns to remain together from the time of birth.

# Recommendations

Member associations are urged to:

- Seek to influence the education of midwives to ensure that they have the knowledge, understanding, appropriate skills and attitudes to care for the newborn and effectively manage emergency care and complications of the newborn,

- Encourage midwives, where appropriate, to develop specialised skills to work together within a multidisciplinary team to care for newborns with special needs and those who are born small or sick,
- Seek to influence their governments to ensure midwives can provide newborn care in enabling environment. This includes having access to specialised equipment and facilities to care for small and sick newborns in communities and in the family home.

## Related ICM Documents

- ICM 2023. International Definition and Scope of Practice of the Midwife
- ICM 2023. Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice
- ICM 2023. Breastfeeding and Human Milk

## Other Relevant Documents

- Tuncalp Ö, Were WM, MacLennan C, Oladapo OT, G€ulmezoglu AM, Bahl R, Daelmans B, Mathai M, Say L, Kristensen F, Temmerman M, Bustreo F. (2015). Quality of care for pregnant women and newborns – the WHO vision. *BJOG*, 122:1045-1049. [http://who.int/maternal\\_child\\_adolescent/topics/quality-of-care/who-vision-quality-care-for-pregnant-women-and-newborns.pdf?ua=1](http://who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/quality-of-care/who-vision-quality-care-for-pregnant-women-and-newborns.pdf?ua=1)
- WHO (30 March 2022) recommendations on maternal and newborn care for a positive postnatal experience <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240045989>
- Lancet series 9 May 2023 small vulnerable newborns.
- <https://www.thelancet.com/pb-assets/Lancet/infographics/small-vulnerable-newborns-2023/summary-1683203871330.pdf>
- WHO 2018 SURVIVE and THRIVE Transforming care for every small and sick newborn. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240045989>
- STAGE WHO KMC <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/367625/9789240071636-eng.pdf?sequence=1>
- WHO recommendations on newborn health: guidelines approved by the WHO Guidelines Review Committee. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2017 (WHO/MCA/17.07). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

- WHO. (2016). Pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum and newborn care: a guide for essential practice – 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.  
<http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/249580/1/9789241549356eng.pdf?ua=1>
- WHO. (2016). Making every Baby count. Audit and review of stillbirths and neonatal deaths.  
<http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/249523/1/9789241511223-eng.pdf?ua=1>

## References

- (1) 152 million babies born preterm in the last decade [Internet]. World Health Organization; 2023 [cited 2024 Apr 10]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-05-2023-152-million-babies-born-preterm-in-the-last-decade>
- (2) The 17 goals | sustainable development [Internet]. United Nations; [cited 2024 Apr 10]. Available from: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
- (3) Making every baby count [Internet]. World Health Organization; [cited 2024 Apr 10]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241511223>
- (4) Essential competencies for midwifery practice [Internet]. 2024 [cited 2024 Apr 10]. Available from: <https://internationalmidwives.org/resources/essential-competencies-for-midwifery-practice/>

### **Adopted at Vienna International Council meeting, 2002**

Revised at Toronto Council Meeting, 2017

Revised at Virtual Council Meeting, 2024

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