

# The Role of Midwives in Maternal Health

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on how midwives are important in the improvement of maternal health as they support and guide women throughout the maternity journey. Midwives as primary antenatal care education givers and deliver labour various support services and including postnatal care thus maintaining the physical, psychological and social health of mothers and newborns. They follow a patient-centered approach to meet the individual needs of every patient and help to gain the trust of the maternity care process. Thus, both midwives, traditional who knowledge possess and skills and understand the principles of modern healthcare, contribute to the decrease of maternal and neonatal mortality rates as well as manage pregnancy complications and support the natural and minimalistic approach to childbirth. Not only do they enhance health results, but their participation minimizes the stress that is placed on the healthcare systems and decreases the rates of medically unnecessary interventions. Midwives are also the women's health advocates and this is more so in areas with limited access to health care services. Through education, community mobilization and cultural appropriateness they fill the gaps that exist in the health care systems. This position makes it easier for them to come up with solutions to the world's maternal and neonatal health problems hence their role in the efforts being made to have sustainable improvements in the maternal and neonatal health. **【1】**

## Introduction

Midwifery is one of the oldest branches of the healthcare profession and has been delivering essential antenatal, intranatal and postpartum care to women. The word "midwife" which is derived from the Old English words "mid" meaning "with and "wif" meaning woman, reflects the role of a midwife as a woman who is with woman during one of the biggest milestones in her life. Midwives have traditionally been the main providers of maternal services and not only did they attend to the medical needs of the mothers but they also met their emotional and sociological needs. Maternal and child health is a major concern all over the world especially in the developing countries. According to the World Health Organization, 810 women die every day from causes related to pregnancy and child birth **【2】**. The majority of these deaths are in the low income countries where access to good health care is a big issue. In such circumstances midwives act as a vital link between women and health care facilities. Midwifery is an important branch of study which is not only essential in the developing countries but is also finding its importance in the developed countries where women are looking for more individualized and noninvasive birthing experiences. The midwives are prepared to provide a holistic care that addresses not only the biological but also the psychological and social aspect of the woman. This approach has been associated with increased maternal fulfillment, decrease rate of medical intercession like cesarean section and enhanced results for the mothers and newborns. Apart from caring for the women, midwives are crucial in the empowerment of the mothers through education. Counselling, antenatal education, one on one counselling and care, midwives empower women to make right decisions regarding their pregnancy and childbirth. This is very important in societies or situations where women have little or no say in matters concerning their health. Midwifery has its problems as well as successes. In many countries of the world midwives are not well paid or appreciated while the care of women in labour is taken over by physicians. Nonetheless, midwives are now being accorded the status of key partners in the improvement of maternal and neonatal health. The International Confederation of Midwives along with other international health agencies are still working hard in order to increase the coverage of midwifery education, regulation and practice so that every woman can get the services of a midwife. This paper reviews the development of midwifery as a profession, the effect of midwives on maternal health and the prospects for the future. In discussing these issues, we wish to emphasise the continuing relevance of midwifery in today's health care delivery systems. **【3】**

## Historical Evolution of Midwifery

Midwifery has existed for millennia. Ancient civilizations such as Egypt and Greece recognized midwives as skilled professionals, often central to community healthcare **【4】**. In medieval Europe, societal stigmas linked midwifery to superstition and witchcraft, leading to discrimination.

By the 18th and 19th centuries, the establishment of training institutions and licensing frameworks professionalized midwifery. However, the 20th century saw a decline in its prominence due to the rise of physician-led maternity care [5] .

Today, midwifery is experiencing a resurgence. Women increasingly seek holistic, patient-centered care, leading to a renewed appreciation for midwives' expertise [6] .

### **The Role of Midwives in Maternal Health**

1. Antenatal Care The antenatal care provided by midwives includes the assessment of the maternal and fetal well-being, counselling of the mothers on nutrition and lifestyle during pregnancy and the preparation of the mothers for labour. Identification of the conditions that may have complications such as gestational diabetes and preeclampsia enables the medical professional to make interventions at the right time. [7]

2. Support During Labor and Delivery During childbirth, midwives apply the best practices in the management of labor and associated delivery. Their decreased focus on cesarean section non-interventionist rates birth and processes, enhanced for maternal instance, experience has [8] .

3. Postpartum Care Some of the aspects that are covered in postnatal care are: Assistance with physical recovery, mental health checks and support with breastfeeding. Midwives also help the new mothers by teaching them about the care of the new born babies thus enhancing the health of the new mothers and the new babies. [9]

### **Training and Skills of Midwives**

Midwifery education combines theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Curricula cover obstetrics, neonatology, and emergency care, with an emphasis on empathy and cultural sensitivity [10] .

Advanced certifications in areas such as high-risk pregnancies and neonatal resuscitation equip midwives to handle complex cases effectively. Ongoing professional development ensures midwives stay updated on advancements in maternal health practices [11] .

### **Challenges in Midwifery**

#### **1. Resource Limitations**

Many low income countries have reported shortage of trained midwives and poor health structures that hinders the quality of services provided [12] .

#### **2. Lack of Recognition**

In some areas, midwives are not given the respect they deserve as compared to physicians which creates various obstacles that affect their work [13] .

#### **3. Burnout and Workforce Shortages**

Midwives may be expected to work under difficult circumstances, which results in stress and early leaving, thus contributing to the shortage of staff [14] .

### **Benefits of Midwifery**

#### **1. The following are some of the enhanced health outcomes**

Research shows that midwife managed care results in lower maternal and new born mortality and reduces medical interventions like cesarean section. [15]

#### **2. Holistic Care**

Mothers receive care that is not only medical but also meets their psychological and social requirements as midwives build confidence and strength in women [16] .

#### **3. Cost-Effectiveness**

The midwifery models of care are more economical as compared to the physician models of care especially in the scarce resource settings [17].

### **The Future of Midwifery**

#### **1. Integration of Technology**

Telemedicine and mobile health applications allow midwives to extend their reach, providing remote monitoring and consultation in underserved areas [18] .

#### **2. Advocacy and Policy Development**

Global health initiatives emphasize the role of midwives in achieving universal health coverage and improving maternal health systems [19] .

#### **3. Sustainability and Innovation**

Eco-friendly birthing practices and the use of renewable resources in maternity care are gaining traction, aligning midwifery with global sustainability goals [20] .

### **Conclusion**

The success of maternal health cannot be discussed without the midwives who play an essential role of being there for the woman during childbirth and providing the best care possible. As champions for mothers, midwives enhance health outcomes while addressing issues concerning the healthcare delivery system.

Expansion of midwifery education, technology, and policies are hence important in the pursuit of the global maternal and newborn health objectives .

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