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From the National Association of
Certified Professional Midwives
June 17, 2005

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Landmark Study Reports Planned Home Births Are Safe

“Outcomes of planned home births with certified professional midwives: large prospective study in North America.” Kenneth C Johnson, senior epidemiologist, Betty-Anne Daviss, project manager. *BMJ* 2005;330:1416 (18 June). Published online at <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/330/7505/1416?ehom>

A study published in the June 18 edition of the *British Medical Journal* finds that when Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) are the maternity care providers for low-risk women having planned home births, that these births are as safe as hospital births. The study also demonstrates that these women in the care of CPMs experience significantly lower rates of medical intervention than their counterparts having hospital births, as well as a much lower rate of birth by cesarean section.

This study is the largest yet of its kind. The researchers used prospective data on more than 5000 planned home births in North America attended by Certified Professional Midwives during the year 2000.

The researchers analyzed outcomes and medical interventions for planned home births, including transports to hospital care. According to the *British Medical Journal* press release, they found:

- Planned homebirths “had a low mortality rate during labor and delivery, similar to [rates] found in most studies of low risk hospital births in North America.”
- “Rates of medical intervention, such as epidural, forceps and cesarean section, were lower for planned home births than for low risk hospital births.”
- “A high degree of safety and maternal satisfaction were reported, and over 87% of mothers and babies did not require transfer to hospital” care.

The National Association of Certified Professional Midwives welcomes the publication of this study that demonstrates the safe and effective care delivered by Certified Professional Midwives. The practice of midwifery was nearly eradicated in North America in the early part of the last century. Independent midwifery began to reemerge in the 1970’s and has made rapid progress in development over the last three decades.

A national certification, the Certified Professional Midwife, was developed for independent midwives in the United States in the mid-1990’s as a way to demonstrate the competency of the

members of this emerging profession. The North American Registry of Midwives administers this certification. In 2005, the 1000th CPM was certified.

This comprehensive study effectively demonstrates the safety of choosing a Certified Professional Midwife for one's maternity care provider. It also suggests that low-risk women may be being subjected to an overuse of medical intervention in the hospital that is not necessary for good outcomes. It shows that evidence-based practice would include the use of Certified Professional Midwives as primary care providers to low-risk women and suggests the benefits that would accrue to these women and their babies if Certified Professional Midwives were fully integrated into the health care system in the United States.

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