

Quickening

Official Newsletter of the American College of Nurse-Midwives

Marketing Midwifery with Confidence and Clarity

ACNM announces a major project to take on what members consistently say is our most important challenge: creating a clear public image of who we are and what we do.

by Melissa Garvey, ACNM Communications Manager

Midwifery is a strong force in the United States. Our clinical outcomes routinely surpass national quality goals. We play a major role in educating medical residents and nurses. We sit on National Institutes of Health and Institute of Medicine panels. State-by-state we are reducing barriers to practice. A global call for midwives has been issued as the number-one way to reduce maternal mortality. In many respects, the US midwifery profession is considered a model for the rest of the world. And yet, there is a deep disconnect between who we are and how we are perceived by others. And it's holding us back.

When you tell a family member or a new acquaintance that you are—or want to be—a midwife, you can almost predict the next four or five questions verbatim. “Is that legal?” “Isn't that dangerous?” “Do you need an education for that?” “You're going to do home births?” “Why would anyone want to go to a midwife?”

As one member commented in a 2008 ACNM survey, “I am very proud to be a nurse-midwife, but get tired of having to explain my title over and over.” Another said, “People still don't know who we are or what we do.” At the ACNM 55th Annual Meeting & Exposition in Washington, DC, in their annual report to the membership, students said, “Many of us have found a widespread lack of awareness about

midwifery among members of the lay and medical communities alike. As rising members of the midwifery community, we are dismayed by the knowledge gaps and extensive misconceptions we encounter, and what they might mean for the future of our profession.”

Now is the time to acknowledge this reality, meet this challenge head-on, and open a new chapter in the ACNM history book. ACNM is implementing a long-term, multi-year effort to create an accurate, positive, respected, and visible image for midwifery. We are committed to this goal and have hired professional health care public relations experts to guide us. We've contracted with Jones Public Affairs (JPA), a public relations agency in Washington, DC, specializing in women's health, to lead this initiative.

“Strategic communications involves reaching out to target audiences with messages that mean something to them—over and over again,” says Kara McCollum, JPA Senior Communications Strategist.


“ACNM has wonderful stories to tell that showcase why women should select a midwife for their care.”

We also have a solid base on which to build. ACNM has already invested in expanding our ability to reach out to consumers. In 2008–2009, the A.C.N.M. Foundation Public Education Project (PEP) provided funding to help us get started

on public relations messages and strategies. We have a new Web site platform with rich, untapped capabilities. We are active on Twitter and Facebook with over 5,200 likes and lots of great discussion. In 2011, we launched Team Midwife, a growing social media campaign designed to unify and mobilize midwifery supporters.

Our goal is to launch the PR campaign at the ACNM 57th Annual Meeting & Exposition in Long Beach, CA, June 2 – 7, 2012.

This is a big project, and we want your input along the way. You can get involved

by joining our Rapid Reactor Panel—a group we will turn to at critical junctures to preview and comment on draft messages and statements via online survey. Visit www.midwife.org/pr to sign up, and turn to page 2 for a behind-the-scenes look at work already underway. 

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According to a 2008 consumer survey conducted by Jones Public Affairs, many women would use a midwife if they knew one was available to them.

- 47.9% of respondents said that it has never occurred to them to use a midwife for their OB/GYN needs.
- 37% wanted to use a midwife but didn't think there was one in their area or covered under her insurance.

 American College of Nurse-Midwives
57th Annual Meeting & Exposition
Long Beach, California • June 2-7, 2012
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