



NEWS RELEASE

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Eunice K.M. “Kitty” Ernst Resigns from ACNM Presidency; Vice President Melissa Avery Takes the Helm

Silver Spring, MD – On November 14, with great regret, the Board of Directors of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) accepted the resignation of Eunice K.M. “Kitty” Ernst, CNM, MPH, DSc(Hon), FACNM, from the office of ACNM President. In accordance with ACNM bylaws, the Vice President, Melissa Avery, PhD, CNM, FACNM, FAAN, has succeeded to the office of ACNM President to complete the unfinished portion of the current presidential term, which extends to 2010.

A true pioneer and icon of midwifery, Kitty Ernst first served as ACNM President from 1961-1963, and was then elected again by the ACNM members in 2007. Throughout her career, she has been an inspirational champion for midwifery education, opening programs for foreign-trained midwives to become certified and establishing distance education for the Frontier School of Midwifery and Family Nursing. She was a driving force in developing and studying the freestanding birth center as an alternative to childbirth in the acute care hospital.

Ernst described her resignation as a difficult decision. “When family needs unexpectedly move front and center, there is no other choice but to make them priority number one,” she told ACNM members. As the Mary Breckinridge Chair of Midwifery at the Frontier School, Ernst also plans to continue to promote midwifery as key to health reform by significantly increasing the midwifery workforce and promoting uniform data collection to demonstrate that improved outcomes can be achieved by integrating midwifery into our system of care in all birth settings.

In a statement to ACNM members, the ACNM Board of Directors praised Ernst’s accomplishments. “Kitty is a remarkable woman who has had a profound impact on midwifery. We are and will always be inspired by her leadership.”

Melissa Avery was elected to the ACNM Board as Vice President in 2005 and re-elected in 2008. She is a professor at the University of Minnesota School of Nursing where she directs the nurse-midwifery education program. Avery was recently inducted as a fellow into the American Academy of Nursing.

Avery has devoted her career to increasing access to midwifery education using distance education methodologies. Her research has focused on maintaining access to vaginal birth options for women with previous cesareans and the use of exercise for women with gestational diabetes. She received her master of science in nursing from the University of Kentucky in 1981 and her PhD from the University of Minnesota in 1993. Her service as Vice President of ACNM has provided her with a well-rounded perspective on the role of the College in promoting quality of care through standards of practice, ongoing competency assessment, and institutional accreditation. She has served as the Board of Directors’ liaison to the American Midwifery Certification Board, the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education, and the A.C.N.M. Foundation, Inc.

“The future is bright for midwifery,” said Avery. “We have a critical role to play as we engage in a national discussion about real health care reform. As ACNM President, I look forward to partnering with our physician, nurse, and other colleagues to ensure that all women have access to quality, affordable health care.”

In the coming weeks, the ACNM Board will elect a new Vice President from among its six Regional Representatives currently serving on the Board. Following that election, the open Regional Representative position will be filled based on procedures detailed in the ACNM bylaws.

For comments and inquiries regarding Ernst's resignation and changes in ACNM leadership, please contact Melissa Garvey at (240) 485-1826 or mgarvey@acnm.org.

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About ACNM

With roots dating to 1929, the American College of Nurse-Midwives is the oldest women's health care association in the U.S. ACNM's mission is to promote the health and well-being of women and newborns within their families and communities through the development and support of the profession of midwifery as practiced by certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives. Midwives believe every individual has the right to safe, satisfying health care with respect for human dignity and cultural variations. More information about ACNM can be found at www.midwife.org.

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