

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Rae Davies, Executive Director
Phone: 1- 888-282-CIMS
E-mail: cimshome@bellsouth.net
Fax: 904-285-2120

CIMS Responds to *Wall Street Journal* Article on Birth Doulas

The Coalition for Improving Maternity Services (CIMS) applauds the *Wall Street Journal* for publicizing on their front page (January 19, 2004) the newest healthcare group assisting birthing women-doulas. CIMS is somewhat discouraged that anecdotes of doctors were used to criticize doulas. In fact the article stated, "In most cases, birth doulas are helpful to laboring women, many doctors say."

Evidence-based care is the gold standard of healthcare. "The best available studies which included nearly 13,000 women," states Rae Davies, CIMS Executive Director, "found that continuous one-to-one labor support provided by trained doulas reduces the use of routine medical interventions and subsequently the short and long-term health risks associated with them. Women who have continuous labor support provided specifically by non-hospital affiliated trained doulas benefited the most. They were 26% less likely to need a cesarean, 41% less likely to need a forceps or vacuum assisted birth and 28% less likely to use analgesia or anesthesia. "

"We know from a recent US national survey of women's childbearing experiences conducted by the Maternity Center Association of New York," added Deborah Woolley, CNM, Ph.D., Co-Chair for CIMS, "that women who had doula care were highly satisfied. In fact, the authors who reviewed the recent studies for the internationally respected Cochrane Collaboration concluded that continuous labor support should be the norm, rather than the exception. "

Today, many pregnant women are well read and informed about their right to "informed refusal", a right acknowledged by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Informed refusal gives a woman the right to determine for herself whether or not to agree to or submit to a suggested procedure after she has evaluated the procedure's risks and benefits. As indicated in the article, when women chose to refuse a certain procedure, that refusal can be wrongly attributed to the doula, likely because the medical personnel may not be used to a patient questioning their recommendations. The recently released *National Healthcare Quality Report* by the Department of Health and Human Services calls for the establishment of high quality, preventive, evidence-based and cost-effective care for all Americans. Providing childbearing women with the continuous supportive care of a trained birth doula does all that and more. The Coalition for Improving Maternity Services endorses the use of continuous emotional and physical support for laboring women, including doulas who are trained to assist laboring women.

The Coalition for Improving Maternity Services (CIMS), a United Nations recognized NGO, is a collaborative effort of numerous individuals, leading researchers, and more than 50 organizations representing over 90,000 members. Promoting a wellness model of maternity care that will improve birth outcomes and substantially reduce costs, CIMS developed the Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative in 1996. A consensus document that has been recognized as an important model for improving the healthcare and well being of children beginning at birth, the Mother-Friendly Childbirth Initiative has been translated into several languages and is gaining support around the world. For more information contact CIMS at 1-888-282-CIMS or visit www.motherfriendly.org