



Contemporary issues in women's health

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The authors of Contemporary Issues in Women's Health solicit reporters and correspondents from throughout the world to make contributions to this section. Please feel free to e-mail or otherwise contact Dr. Timothy Johnson at trbj@umich.edu or Prof. S. Arulkumaran at s.arulkumaran@sghms.ac.uk if you have reports or stories that you would like to have included. We would be happy to attribute the items to those reporters and correspondents who give permission in their transmittal. Otherwise, we will share those reports that we think are of the greatest interest to our readership without attribution.

Safe Motherhood Newsletter 'Is Back'

The Safe Motherhood newsletter published by the Department of Reproductive Health and Research at the World Health Organization returns with its 2002 issue. Copies of this newsletter are available from the World Health Organization, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland. This 16 page newsletter gives updates on Safe Motherhood initiatives. This issue includes several comments on skilled attendants and what specific skills these attendants need to have. There are individual stories and descriptions of new availability. There is an exciting new manual entitled '*Managing Complications in Pregnancy and Childbirth: A Guide for Midwives and Doctors*' which is available in English at http://www.who.int/reproductive_health/. Another interesting article concerns the recruitment

of First Ladies and the use of country leaders, especially First Ladies, to focus on women's health and reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality.

The newsletter also lists a number of resources available, including a new booklet on the hemoglobin color scale: a new tool for detecting anemia which is available at hbcoulorescale@who.int; a wall chart on birth preparedness and complication readiness available at <http://www.mnh.jhpi-ego.org>; and several new WHO clinical tools are also available from the site above. A number of practice guides, resources, and new publications as well as events and websites are described. Those interested should contact the WHO to be placed on the mailing list. Other websites that are mentioned include: The White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood (<http://www.whiteribbon-alliance.org>), the Academy for Educational Development (<http://www.aed.org/>), The Communication Initiative Network (<http://www.comminet.com>), and Reproductive Health Online (<http://www.reproline.jhu.edu/>).

This is a useful tool, and all those interested in women's health should access this informative newsletter.

Contraceptive Technology Update Reports US Defunding of UN Population Fund

The American Health Consultants 'Contraceptive Technology Update' of December 2002 reports

that the United States government is cutting off support for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This decision is a major victory for anti-family planning members of the United States Congress, particularly targeted against the Chinese government's 'one-child-per-family' policy. This punishment applied to no other agency working in China and receiving US support. The Contraceptive Technology Update is available online at <http://www.ahcpub.com/online.html> and is a useful monthly newsletter available to health professionals.

Maternity Center Association Reports the First National US Survey of Women's Childbearing Experiences

The Maternity Center Association of New York has published an important report entitled '*Listening to Mothers: Report of the First National US Survey on Women's Childbearing Experiences*'. This landmark survey is the first time United States women have been quoted at the national level about their maternity experiences. This survey was carried out with the guidance of the Listening to Mothers National Advisory Council. The survey is

available from the Maternity Center Association website at <http://www.maternitywise.org/listeningtomothers/>. The website also contains additional material related to the survey, including a PDF file with both the survey report executive summary and recommendations that the Maternity Center Association developed in response to survey results.

This is an excellent publication that highlights the norm of technology-intensive labor management in the U.S. with the majority of women receiving electronic monitoring, intravenous drip, epidural analgesia, and artificial rupture of membranes. Almost two-thirds of women used epidural analgesia, including 59% of those who had vaginal birth. Mothers gave high ratings to the ability of epidurals to relieve labor pain, but between 26% and 41% of mothers were unable to respond to questions about the side effects associated with epidurals. Almost one mother in five was experiencing some type of postpartum depression. In addition, the report highlighted the declining access to VBAC, the differences in vaginal and cesarean birth experiences, and the differences between first-time and experienced mothers.