



November 2007

## College of Midwives of Ontario Position Statement on Vaccination

The College of Midwives recognizes that many parents will have questions and will want to discuss the issue of vaccination\* with their midwife as a trusted care provider. Should midwives choose to enter into this discussion, they should ensure that they are well informed and aware of the latest evidence, research and recommendations prior to addressing the issue of vaccination. It is expected that the principles of informed choice and the process required by the College's *Informed Choice Standard* will be applied in these discussions. As a part of the informed choice process midwives should inform clients that vaccination is outside the scope of midwifery practice and recommend that they discuss vaccination with the caregiver who will be providing that care. Clients may also be referred to the local public health unit for information. Furthermore, clients should be informed of existing community standards regarding vaccination as an important and effective public health intervention. (See References list below)

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The College was requested by a physician to clarify its position on infant immunization; this request was also provided to the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario. At its May 2007 council meeting CMO Council considered the request and held a discussion of the issue; it was decided to develop a statement that outlines the scope of midwifery and the process of informed choice and that provides advice to midwives on their appropriate involvement in their client's decision-making with respect to this issue. It was the opinion of Council that a statement would provide clarity to midwives, their clients and other health care providers about the role of midwives with respect to infant vaccination.

### LITERATURE SEARCH

A review of midwifery organizations' documents in Canada, the US and the United Kingdom revealed that only the American College of Nurse-Midwives has a statement on immunization. None of the midwifery regulatory colleges in Canada has a statement or policy on infant vaccination. The International Confederation of Midwives does not have any type of document on this issue either.

The College of Chiropractors of Ontario has a standard "to ensure that the public is aware that immunization is outside the scope of chiropractors and to ensure that chiropractors

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\* We have chosen to use the term vaccination in order to be most precise when referring to the pharmaceutical intervention intended to induce immunity. In contrast, other sources may use the terms "vaccination" and "immunization" interchangeably, despite the fact that occasionally vaccines may fail to produce immunity. The term "immunization" appears in this position statement when other organization's statements or documents use this term.

advise patients to consult with health providers who have vaccination/immunization in their scope i.e., physicians, nurses and nurse practitioners”.

#### MIDWIFERY MODEL AND SCOPE

The scope of midwifery practice includes care for the mother and her newborn up to six weeks postpartum. Midwives are required to provide informed choice to women and their families throughout their care and to support women’s informed decisions. The continuity of care provided by midwives contributes to the development of a trusting relationship. Midwives and their clients may have discussions on a variety of topics related to pregnancy, birth and parenting.

The informed choice paradigm anticipates the decisions that a woman and her family face and provides time and information for an examination of all the elements that contribute to individualized decision-making. With this in mind it is quite likely that many midwifery clients will begin to anticipate the choices to be made in early parenthood while still in midwifery care.

#### PUBLIC HEALTH

National Guidelines for Childhood Immunization Practices were developed by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization and are published by the Public Health Agency of Canada. This document states that “Vaccine-preventable diseases have experienced a tremendous decrease in Canada, demonstrating the effectiveness of existing provincial and territorial programs, and the successful role played by private and public providers.”

An Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care fact sheet on immunization states that immunizations are recognized as one of the most effective public health interventions.

A World Health Organization fact sheet states, “immunization is a proven tool for controlling and even eradicating disease and vaccines are very safe, and side-effects are minor – especially when compared to the diseases they are designed to prevent.”

As a member of the health care team midwives should consider their role in public health agencies’ initiatives locally and globally.

#### References

World Health Organization, *Fact Sheet No. 288: Immunization against diseases of public health importance*, March 2005

International Confederation of Midwives, *Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice*, April 2002

Public Health Agency of Canada, *It’s Your Health - Misconceptions about Vaccine Safety*, [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)

Canadian Pediatric Society website

American College of Nurse-Midwives, *Immunization Status of Women and Their Families, February 2004*

College of Chiropractors of Ontario, *Immunization/Vaccination, Standard of Practice S-015, June 13, 2004*

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Public Health Division, *Immunization: Your Best Protection, Information for Parents Fact Sheet, January 26, 2005*

College of Midwives of Ontario, *Core Competencies, January 1994*

Canadian Midwifery Regulators Consortium, *Core Competencies for Canadian Midwives, 2005*

Royal College of Midwives website

United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (UKCC) website