



# Midwifery Care: Elevating Homebirth as a Safe, Cost-Effective Model for Healthy Pregnancies

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**Commentary**

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In recent years, the conversation surrounding childbirth has evolved, with more families exploring options beyond the conventional hospital setting. Midwifery care and homebirths, though often misunderstood, present a compelling, safe, and cost-effective model that aligns with both physiological and psychological well-being of mothers and infants. As a public health professional and a mother who has personally experienced the transformative power of midwifery care, I believe it's time to elevate homebirth as a mainstream option.

As a public health professional and a researcher with a clinical background, I've encountered numerous narratives and data points advocating for a re-evaluation of our birthing paradigms. My personal experience with homebirth (under the excellent care of midwife Tiffany Hoffman of Sacred Space Midwifery), coupled with my professional background, gave me time to reflect and study on this further. What I learnt underscores the potential benefits of integrating midwifery care into mainstream healthcare systems as a cost-effective and health-promoting model.

Homebirth, under the guidance of skilled midwives, offers a unique and holistic approach to childbirth. It prioritizes the natural, physiological processes of birth, fostering an environment of comfort, support, and minimal intervention. This contrasts sharply with the medically managed hospital births that dominate in many parts of the world, where interventions are often routine rather than reserved for genuine medical necessity.

The journey of my third child's birth was transformative. Unlike the highly medicalized environment of hospitals, our home provided a sanctuary of calm and familiarity.

One of my favourite aspects of midwifery care is the personalized and continuous support provided by midwives. My midwife's presence was unobtrusive yet reassuring. She respected my space and only intervened when necessary, such as checking the baby's heart rate with a fetal Doppler. This minimal intervention approach allowed the natural hormonal cascades that facilitate labor and birth to occur uninterrupted.

Another aspect I deeply value is the emphasis on informed choice and agency. Throughout my pregnancy and labor, my midwife provided comprehensive information about every decision, empowering me to make choices that aligned with my values and preferences. This respect for my autonomy was in stark contrast to the often prescriptive nature of hospital births.

The entire experience was a testament to the body's innate ability to birth when supported by the right conditions.

## The Case for Midwifery and Homebirth

### Cost-Effectiveness

Midwifery-led homebirths can significantly reduce healthcare costs. Hospital births involve substantial expenses related to medical interventions, facility fees, and extended stays. In contrast, homebirths eliminate many of these costs, offering a more economical alternative without compromising safety. Studies have consistently shown that homebirths attended by qualified midwives are as safe as hospital births for low-risk pregnancies, with fewer interventions and complications.

## Enhanced Maternal and Infant Outcomes

The undisturbed environment of a homebirth promotes the natural release of oxytocin and endorphins, hormones crucial for labor progression and pain management. This hormonal cascade reduces the need for pain relief medications and accelerates postpartum recovery. Additionally, immediate skin-to-skin contact and delayed cord clamping, practices more easily facilitated at home, have been shown to improve neonatal outcomes.

## Empowerment and Agency

Homebirth empowers women by placing them at the centre of their birthing experience. The sense of agency and control over the birth process can enhance maternal satisfaction and reduce the risk of postpartum depression and anxiety. Women who choose homebirth often report feeling more respected and supported in their birth choices, fostering a positive start to motherhood.

## Reduced Interventions

In a home setting, interventions such as induction, epidurals, and cesarean sections are less common. These interventions, while sometimes necessary, carry risks that can affect both mother and baby. By minimizing unnecessary interventions, homebirth supports the natural birthing process and reduces the likelihood of complications associated with these medical procedures.

## Cultural and Psychological Benefits

The home environment provides cultural and psychological comfort that is often lacking in hospitals. Birth, a deeply personal and significant life event, can benefit from the familiarity and intimacy of the home setting. This comfort can positively influence the labor process, contributing to smoother and more satisfactory birthing experiences.

## Integrating Homebirth into Mainstream Healthcare

To realize the potential benefits of homebirth, healthcare systems must adopt a more integrated approach. This

involves:

### Training

Ensuring midwives are highly trained and accredited to provide safe and effective care. This includes continuous professional development and adherence to evidence-based practices.

### Collaboration with Hospitals

Establishing strong referral systems and collaborative relationships between midwives and hospitals to ensure seamless transitions if complications arise.

### Public Education

Raising awareness about the safety and benefits of homebirth for low- risk pregnancies through public health campaigns and education programs.

### Policy Support

Advocating for policies that support midwifery care and homebirth, including insurance coverage and reimbursement for midwifery services.

### Conclusion

The integration of midwifery-led homebirth into mainstream healthcare offers a promising pathway to enhance maternal and infant health outcomes while reducing healthcare costs. My personal journey of homebirth reaffirmed the profound impact of a supportive, natural birthing environment. As we move towards a more inclusive and holistic healthcare model, incorporating midwifery care into the mainstream could transform the childbirth experience for countless families, fostering a deeper connection between mothers, their babies, and the act of birth itself.

By embracing and promoting midwifery care, we can provide women with safe, empowering, and cost-effective options for childbirth, ultimately benefiting the health system as a whole.