

Midwives Catch 3,000 Babies at UC San Diego Medical Center

October 07, 2009 |

California's Only Hospital-Based Birth Center Celebrates 10th Anniversary

More than four million babies are born in the United States every year. A growing number of these infants, more than 10 percent, are “caught” by midwives. This year, UC San Diego Medical Center celebrates the 10th anniversary of its Birth Center—California’s only in-hospital unit dedicated to natural childbirth. During the anniversary, which also coincides with National Midwifery Week, the Center is due to receive its 3,000th baby.



the whole Ries family celebrates the birth of Josephine in a four-poster queen-sized bed at UCSD Medical Center

“At UCSD’s Birth Center, I labored on a beautiful queen-sized bed, eventually giving birth while sitting in a birthing chair,” said Kelly Frederick, 36, of San Diego. “My midwife gently guided my son Luke’s head and shoulders out of me. With her direction, I reached down to lift him up onto my chest. It was the most wonderful, sacred and meaningful way for me to meet my baby. I was ecstatic. I felt like I did it on my own.”

Distinct from a labor and delivery service, the UCSD Birth Center specializes in caring for women who have a full-term, low-risk pregnancy. The midwives partner with family members and sometimes a doula, or birth assistant, to create a mom-centered, safe and satisfying birth without anesthesia or continuous fetal monitoring. If intervention is needed, access to a team of nationally recognized specialists in maternal-fetal medicine, obstetrics, anesthesia and neonatology is available.



UCSD Midwife Karen Ruby Brown, CNM, MS

“Midwives honor the normalcy and physiology of birth, looking to the mother to guide the birthing process,” said Karen Perdion, CNM, MSN, director of the UCSD Midwifery Program. “Moms at the UCSD Birth Center have control over their environment, freedom to labor in the location they choose, at the pace they choose, in the position they choose, and do so surrounded by family and friends and a doula if they want one.”

A certified nurse-midwife (CNM) is an advanced nurse practitioner who provides primary care to women throughout their lifetime. Specializing in pregnancy, birth and postpartum care, all CNMs are registered nurses who have graduated from a master’s-level, specialized nurse-midwifery program. Accredited by the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), midwives must pass a national certification exam and meet strict requirements set by state health agencies. According to the ACNM, the number of CNM/CM attended births has increased by 33 percent, reaching 317,168 in 2006.

UCSD Medical Center has the only dedicated in-hospital birth center in California—one of a few in the United States. Now celebrating its 10th anniversary, UCSD midwives have attended close to

9,000 births. One third of these births have occurred in the Birth Center. The midwife team reports a primary Cesarean section rate of 13 percent compared to the national average of 31 percent. In addition to a low C-section rate, the midwives have a 74 percent success rate for vaginal births after C-section. Their episiotomy rate is less than one percent.

“In the majority of circumstances, women can birth independently without intervention,” said Frederick’s midwife Karen Ruby Brown, CNM, MSN. “Movies and television often portray birth as chaotic, directing the mother to count and push harder and longer in a frenzy that peaks at birth. This is fiction. In reality, a family can quietly and joyfully witness the transition from pushing to crowning to birth to bonding without a lot of noise, light, or chaos. The process is transformational and can happen in the birth center or on labor and delivery with anesthesia.”

Jenifer Hirsch, CNM, MS, emphasizes the intimate connection between the mother and midwife.

“As the midwife, my objectives are to be careful, loving, and constantly alert. I want the woman to feel capable, taken care of and healthy,” said Hirsch. “As the baby emerges, I watch the baby and mother at the same time. I ask her to touch the baby’s head. The wonder on her face as she realizes that she is birthing her own baby is like light shining from a sun. I am both proud, as well as humbled by the achievement of her birth.”

Mothers who birth at UC San Diego Medical Center have the option of having a doula at her side day or night. The word “doula” comes from Greek meaning “a woman who serves” and now refers to a professional who provides continuous physical, emotional and informational support to the mother before, during and after birth.



the UCSD Birth Center helped the Guadalupe family achieve a natural, satisfying delivery without aid of anesthesia

“Giving birth in a hospital is a custom that is only a few generations old. Doulas have brought back an age-old art of assisting mothers in birth,” said Ann Fulcher, director of the Hearts & Hands Volunteer Doula Program at UC San Diego Medical Center.

“Drawing on centuries of tradition, doulas help with comfort measures such as relaxation, breathing, massage and positioning.”

“UCSD Medical Center has been home to midwifery for over a quarter-century,” said Thomas Moore, MD, professor and chairman of the Department of Reproductive Medicine at UC San Diego Medical Center. “We are thrilled that our Birth Center is celebrating its tenth anniversary. The Center provides a highly personalized birthing experience within a prestigious academic medical center—an ideal combination for families seeking a natural birth.”

The UCSD Birth Center offers four spacious rooms with amenities such as queen-sized beds, hydrotherapy, birthing chairs and balls, and aromatherapy. Tours of the Birth Center may be scheduled by calling 619 -543-3863.

#

Media Contact: Jackie Carr, 619-543-6163, jcarr@ucsd.edu

Related Specialties

- [▶ Obstetrics & Childbirth](#)
- [▶ Doula Services](#)

Share This Article



Related News

[UC San Diego Health Begins Treating Multiple Myeloma with CAR T-cell Therapy](#)
6/3/2021

[Social Justice as Part of the Remedy for What Ails Us](#)
6/3/2021

[Diet Plays Critical Role in NASH Progressing to Liver Cancer in Mouse Model](#)
6/1/2021

[Noted Researcher and Scientific Leader Jack E. Dixon Retires](#)
5/27/2021

[View All News >](#)

Follow Us

 [Follow @ucsdhealth](#)

