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**RESEARCH AND PRACTICE ARTICLE**

**Nurse-Midwifery Practice at Hutzel Women's Hospital, Detroit, Michigan:  
A Quarter Century of Success**

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

First and foremost we thank the women and families who chose nurse-midwifery care and the dedicated, hard-working Hutzel nurse-midwives who day after day compassionately and expertly care for women in this challenging urban environment. This article, in addition gives tribute to all of the staff nurse-midwives and nurse-midwifery students whose dedication to the women of our community has contributed to the positive practice outcomes.

**ABSTRACT:**

The Hutzel Women's Hospital/University Women's Care (HWH/UWC) nurse-midwife practice is not only the oldest in the state of Michigan but also one of the busiest. This article details this exemplary nurse-midwifery practice, education and research in an urban, inner city academic setting. The setting, practice characteristics, history and outcomes are described.

**Keywords:** midwifery, nurse-midwifery, health disparities, vulnerable and underserved populations, pregnancy, childbirth, urban health

**Biographies:**

Deborah S. Walker is an Associate Professor at Wayne State University (WSU) College of Nursing and School of Medicine, OB/GYN. She is the Graduate Program Director for Women, Neonates and Children and the Coordinator of the Nurse-Midwifery and Women's Health Nurse Practitioner programs in the WSU College of Nursing.

Janine Bieda is a certified nurse-midwife in the Wayne State University School of Medicine, OB/GYN's Nurse-Midwifery Division.

Mary Lewis is the Division Chief for Nurse-Midwifery in the Wayne State University School of Medicine's Department of OB/GYN and adjunct faculty in the Wayne State University College of Nursing.



Janice Wery holds the first state nurse-midwifery certificate issued in Michigan and was the first Certified Nurse-Midwife to practice at Hutzel Women's Hospital. She lives in Ann Arbor, MI.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) at Hutzel Women's Hospital/University Women's Care (HWH/UWC) celebrated twenty-five years of practice at the Detroit Medical Center (DMC) in Detroit, MI in 2005. During these twenty-five years, the HWH/UWC, most often referred to as the "Hutzel midwifery practice", made important contributions to the health of women and families amid the difficult and challenging urban environment in Detroit, MI.

Not only is the Hutzel midwifery practice the oldest in the state, it is also one of the busiest with the CNMs attending the births of almost 25% of all babies born at Hutzel Women's Hospital for a total over 25 years of over 40,000 births. From the inception, the Hutzel CNMs have used a holistic approach to pregnancy and childbirth in serving women and families from Detroit's most vulnerable groups: adolescents, members of diverse ethnic and racial groups, economically disadvantaged women and families, immigrants and/or persons living in medically underserved areas.

In this article, the history of the Hutzel midwifery practice is described and the future directions are discussed. Also note that 'midwifery' and 'nurse-midwifery' are used interchangeably to designate Certified Nurse-Midwife providers. It is hoped that this information may be useful to health care providers and policy makers in Michigan and other major urban centers. This description of the history and current practice of the Hutzel midwives makes an important contribution to the health care literature and joins reports of other U.S. midwifery practices (Greulich et al., 1994; Sedler et al., 1993; Haire & Elsbecoy, 1991)

## **Hutzel Midwifery Practice Setting**

Detroit, as a principal city, with just fewer than one million inhabitants and a territory of 139 square miles, is a northern industrial city that grew rapidly in the early 1900s as a center for economic development. The urban cycle of population exodus, business and industry relocation to the suburbs, and lost taxpayer revenue has meant years of declining resources for Detroit's citizens. Already distressed neighborhoods are further burdened by pollution and toxic waste hazards, the residue of previous industrial dominance in a more environmentally naïve time.

Like other large cities, Detroit has a high percentage of individuals and families with incomes below the federal poverty line. In 2000, the per capita income for the City of Detroit was \$14,717. In comparison, the 2000 per capita income for the county that houses Detroit (Wayne County) was \$20,058 (US Census, 2000).

On a more positive note, Detroit has long been a city of diverse ethnic neighborhoods with rich cultural traditions. From 1990 to 2000, Detroit experienced a 32% increase in its immigrant population (Brookings Institute, 2000). In the 2000 Census, African Americans represented 81.2% of Detroit's population (Brookings Institute, 2000). Recently, immigrants from the



Middle East, Asia, Africa, South and Central America, Russia and Eastern Europe have become part of the Detroit community.

Women in Detroit (Wayne County) experience a high percentage of preterm births, teen pregnancies, and often delay seeking prenatal care. Wayne County Natality statistics for 2004, as compared to the State of Michigan, revealed important differences in key characteristics such as a higher percentage of births to women under 20 (12.1 vs. 9.6), a higher percentage of women experiencing the birth of a low birth weight infant (10.7 vs. 8.4) and a lower percentage of women receiving care during their first trimester (76.4 vs. 82.7) (MDCH, 2004). Demographic and personal characteristics from the 2004 Natality statistics demonstrated that a higher percentage of women in Wayne County who gave birth in 2004 were more likely to have less than 12 years of education (23.6 vs. 16.8), and be unmarried (48.1 vs. 35.6) but were less likely to report smoking while pregnant (12.4 vs. 13.8) (MDCH, 2004). It is within this challenging setting, that the midwifery practice at Hutzel Women's Hospital provides care.

### **Hutzel Midwifery Practice History**

In 1978, after the Michigan Public Health Code legalized nurse-midwifery practice, Jan Wery, CNM approached the Chairman of the Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB/GYN) Department at Hutzel Women's Hospital with a request to support her application for practice privileges. In 1979 she joined the staff of the DMC to develop birthing rooms at Hutzel Women's Hospital but was also determined to see midwifery care provided in those birthing rooms.

Mary Conklin, RN, of the Maternal Child Division, Michigan Department of Public Health was a strong supporter and proponent for nurse-midwifery care within the Public Health Department, with physicians, legislators, hospital staff, and consumers. She was an eloquent spokesperson speaking tirelessly to those who were willing to listen about nurse-midwifery care. She helped clear obstacles to practice and convinced doubters of the high quality and efficacy of midwifery care. She guided Michigan's first nurse-midwives gently but clearly and supported them with her enthusiasm and her physical presence. She mentored with the greatest of patience. Michigan nurse-midwives are practicing today largely due to her tireless contributions.

On November 28, 1980, Janice Wery was notified that the hospital Board of Trustees had approved her application for privileges as a Certified Nurse-Midwife in the OB/GYN Department. She was appointed as the Coordinator of the Nurse-Midwifery Service which, by her request, was located in the Department of Nursing.

The first official Hutzel nurse-midwifery managed labor and birth occurred in a birthing room in October, 1980. Regular prenatal care had been given by the woman's physician until official transfer to nurse-midwifery care was possible. This woman and many to follow were very strong and determined women. They were, for the most part women, of low obstetrical risk. Many were nurses who were looking for a different care focus; one where they could have more input and decision making ability in their care. Many women did not tell their families until after their baby's birth that they were receiving care from a nurse-midwife because of the resistance they perceived they would face. Because prenatal care was provided in the Hutzel clinic setting, some of the clinic patients began requesting nurse-midwifery care too and the caseload diversified.



In 1987, Hutzel Women's Hospital administrators and the OB/GYN Department incorporated the private CNM practice into a hospital-based nurse-midwifery practice. By 1988, there were seven CNMs practicing at Hutzel Women's Hospital with multiple clinical sites around the Detroit metropolitan area.

It was the intent of the midwives who started the practice to provide the full range of midwifery care, including primary and prenatal care services, enabling increased access to care by the most vulnerable and underserved women in the community. With Hutzel Women's Hospital addition of nurse-midwives, the outreach to the community increased and this intent was more fully realized. In the early 1990's, there were twenty-three nurse-midwives in practice at Hutzel Hospital.

### **The Hutzel Midwifery Practice Today**

Since 1997, the nurse-midwifery practice has been a part of the Wayne State University (WSU) School of Medicine (SOM). At that time, the WSU SOM, Department of OB/GYN, incorporated the nurse-midwives and their practice into the Department as a separate Division. In 2007, there are seven full-time and seven contingent midwives on staff.

The Nurse-Midwifery Division is one of six divisions each with a chair who reports directly to the OB/GYN Department Chair. The current Division Chair, Mary Lewis, MS, CNM, sits on various policy-making committees such as the Department Advisory Committee, Medical Staff Committee and Quality Assurance. She also participates in resident interviewing and evaluation. She divides her time between administrative duties and clinical responsibilities.

With the Hutzel CNMs' presence in various community settings, women have become aware of their services and the care they give. The nurse-midwife is the provider of choice for a large population of women in Detroit. Through guidelines for consultation and transfer, jointly written by the Nurse-Midwifery and Maternal-Fetal Medicine (MFM) Division directors, women are evaluated and effectively cared for according to their risk status by the CNMs, MFM physicians or co-managed collaboratively. The Hutzel nurse-midwifery care guidelines were published in 1994 and are available for purchase (WSU, 2004).

A full range of women's health services are provided by the CNMs at various sites in the Detroit metropolitan area. Today as in the practice's past, the majority of the clinics serve economically disadvantaged women who are ethnically diverse and of low and moderate risk status. A recent development is the addition of two CNM private practice sites, one in Detroit near Hutzel Women's Hospital and one in Southfield, Michigan. Clients attending prenatal care at any of the CNM clinic sites receive care during labor and birth at from the CNMs at Hutzel Women's Hospital. In the future, new clinical sites in the Metro area will be developed. The 2006 Hutzel midwifery practice statistics are presented in Table 1.



Table 1.  
*Hutzel Nurse-Midwifery Practice Statistics, 2006*

Histories and Physicals	1,241
Return OB Visits	6,182
Postpartum Visits	603
Gynecology/Family Planning	2,316
Total Out-patient Visits	10,189
CNM Managed Labors	1,041
C-Sections	85
Forceps	2
Vacuum Extractions	6
CNM Deliveries	949

### Linkages and Firsts

The Detroit Medical Center and Hutzel Women's Hospital are linked to Wayne State University School of Medicine and College of Nursing. The nurse- midwives are adjunct faculty in the WSU School of Medicine and some also hold joint appointments in the WSU College of Nursing. Additionally, linkages were quickly expanded through contracts for nurse-midwifery care with the Detroit Health Department now the Detroit Department of Health Promotion and Wellness. Hutzel midwives have led the way in several important areas in addition to being the first nurse midwifery practice in Michigan. They have provided leadership in the clinical education of nurse-midwifery and medical students and residents, providing care for incarcerated women, starting the local ACNM chapter, and offering innovative care delivery models such as CenteringPregnancy. These examples are just a few of their contributions. Table 2 presents a more complete list of the major linkages and firsts.



Table 2.  
*Hutzel Midwifery Practice Pioneering Firsts*

- ✓ Hutzel Women's Hospital nurse-midwives were the first in the State of Michigan to obtain hospital practice privileges.
- ✓ The Hutzel nurse-midwifery practice was one of the first in the country to provide care for incarcerated women.
- ✓ The Division of Nurse-Midwifery, chaired by a Nurse-Midwife, within the Wayne State University School of Medicine Dept. of OB/GYN is one of the few Divisions of Nurse-Midwifery in U.S. Schools of Medicine.
- ✓ The Detroit Board of Education approached Hutzel Women's Hospital administrators for nurse-midwifery care at two of their schools for pregnant and parenting teens –the implementation of midwifery care in these settings was a first in the State.
- ✓ Hutzel nurse-midwives were the primary clinical practice site and first clinical preceptors for the University of Michigan's Nurse-Midwifery Education Program
- ✓ The first ACNM chapter in the state, Chapter 7, Region 4, was started in 1980 by Hutzel CNMs.
- ✓ Hutzel nurse-midwives provide care at a women's shelter --a first for the Detroit area.
- ✓ The first Detroit CenteringPregnancy group was started by Hutzel CNMs at the DMC.
- ✓ A Hutzel CNM is the first nurse-midwife on the Michigan Department of Community Health's Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Committee.
- ✓ Hutzel nurse-midwives are the primary clinical site for the first Detroit-based nurse-midwifery education program at Wayne State University College of Nursing.
- ✓ Publication of Hutzel nurse-midwifery clinical practice guidelines: Hutzel nurse-midwifery Practice: Pathways to Clinical Practice. To purchase, contact Tracey Carnes tcarnes@med.wayne.edu

### **Educational Commitment**

Over the past twenty-five years, the midwifery practice at Hutzel Women's Hospital has maintained a strong commitment to the education of students from a variety of health care disciplines. The midwives view the educational commitment equal in importance to that of clinical practice and imperative for nurse-midwifery care to continue for women and families in the Detroit metro area, in the State of Michigan and beyond.



The success of the midwifery practice's long tradition of educational activity can be attributed not only to the large population of ethnically diverse women it serves, but also to the CNMs' dedication to teaching holistic health care that equally values the physical, mental, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual needs of clients and their families. The wide variety of both community and hospital-based CNM practice settings provide students with unique clinical and research opportunities. While the majority of the educational activities occur in the clinical setting, the nurse- also participate by providing academic lectures and seminars, orientation lectures, student admission interviews, course content reviews and student evaluations.

Educating medical students on the Labor and Delivery unit continues to be one of the nurse-midwifery practice's major clinical and educational responsibilities. The overwhelmingly positive experiences reported by these students have led to the development of an elective clinical rotation in nurse-midwifery. Each rotation lasts one month and is offered to both third and fourth year medical students. The elective is designed to provide intense individual clinical opportunities to medical students interested in pursuing a residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology. The elective includes intrapartum experiences on Labor and Delivery at Hutzel Hospital as well as antepartum, postpartum and gynecological experiences at community-based nurse-midwife clinics. At the end of the rotation, each student is required to submit a three to five page evaluation of how the elective has impacted their future practice and perspective of midwifery care. Feedback from the students over the past year has been extremely positive. Students state that their ability to learn is significantly improved by the one-on-one time they are allowed to spend with each midwife. In addition, many students have observed that the good rapport between nurse-midwives and their clients that they've seen challenges them to do the same in their future careers.

Resident physicians are able to dedicate more time to their academic pursuits, research requirements and clinical opportunities because of the Hutzel midwives' support on Labor and Delivery as well as in the University Health Center clinics. The midwives and residents work as a team in a collaborative relationship to help cover clinical commitments and improve the overall quality of care provided to clients. For example, one morning each week the midwives cover Labor and Delivery with attending physicians to allow the residents to attend grand rounds. Nurse-midwives also teach first and second year OB residents as well as family practice and ER residents how to manage normal births and consider alternative management plans in Labor and Delivery.

The Hutzel nurse-midwifery practice provides clinical experiences for undergraduate nursing students from several colleges and universities in the Detroit Metropolitan area. Students from Wayne State University, Wayne Community College, Henry Ford Community College, Madonna University and the University of Detroit-Mercy have observed midwifery practice and learned about the unique professional opportunities available to them after graduation. Graduate women's health nurse practitioner students from Wayne State University have also participated in well-woman gynecology and antenatal clinical rotations within the midwifery practices.

One of the practice's strongest commitments is to nurse-midwifery education. Nurse-midwife students have come to Hutzel from the following education programs: CNEP, Philadelphia University, University of Illinois, University of Michigan and now Wayne State University. All





clinical placements are arranged by the educational coordinator according to each student's individual needs and the availability of clinical sites. The practice provides full-scope clinical experiences in well-woman gynecology, antepartum, intrapartum and postpartum care as well as integration rotations. Newborn care experiences are available with the pediatric nurse practitioners at the DMC. A Nurse-Midwifery Fellowship Program has been designed to provide clinical experience for CNMs who have graduated but have not able to gain employment or for experienced CNMs who have been out-of-practice and would like to refresh their skills. Additionally, work has begun on the development of a nurse-midwifery student scholarship.

### **Wayne State University Nurse-Midwifery Education Program**

The Hutzel midwives are committed to participating in the development of and close integration with the new Wayne State University College of Nursing (CON) nurse-midwifery education program, the first in Detroit. Mary Lewis, CNM and Janine Bieda, CNM and current OB/GYN Department Chair, Dr. John Malone, were most instrumental in supporting and assisting the Division of Nurse-Midwifery's collaborative efforts with the Wayne State University College of Nursing in developing a nurse-midwifery education program.

The nurse-midwifery education program was approved by the College of Nursing on May 15, 2002 and the WSU Graduate Council on January 22, 2003. Dr. Deborah Walker joined the faculty as Coordinator of the Nurse-Midwifery specialty in August, 2003 and preaccreditation status was granted by the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) in March, 2004. In July, 2005, a training grant aimed at supporting the program's mission to educate midwives for practice in the urban environment was received from the Health Resources and Services Administration, Division of Nursing.

The new nurse-midwifery education program fits well with the urban mission of Wayne State University and its commitment of service to Detroit's underserved populations. In order to prepare the future nurse-midwife for practice in the urban setting, the curriculum places strong emphasis on providing culturally sensitive care and incorporates content on urban health care issues such as violence, substance abuse and mental health. The majority of student clinical experiences are with the Hutzel nurse-midwives in the urban setting caring for underserved and vulnerable women and families.

Students may choose from full-time or part-time programs of study or a post-master's certificate. The first group of 5 nurse-midwifery students started the clinical courses in the Fall, 2005 semester and graduated in May, 2007.

### **Research Activities**

The Hutzel midwives have participated in research projects since the inception of the practice. Hutzel Women's Hospital is home to the Perinatal Research Branch, the only branch of the NIH outside of the Maryland campus. An extensive perinatal database at Hutzel Women's Hospital contains consecutive births from 1984 to the present and encompasses data on over 120,000 pregnancies. It has been a challenge to the midwives to ensure that the births they attended were recorded accurately under their names in the perinatal database. However, beginning in 2003, the



perinatal database was updated and converted to a web-based Electronic Medical Record (EMR). This Perinatal EMR is designed to acquire research-quality data which feeds this longitudinal perinatal dataset. This new combined perinatal database-EMR, Women, Infant and Neonatal Database (WIND), will more accurately record CNM births.

As the practice has grown and developed, the midwives have also become more interested in conducting their own research. A Research Committee was formed in 2005 with the mission of supporting and facilitating research within the Nurse-Midwifery Division. Currently three funded projects are underway with Dr. Deborah Walker as Principal Investigator; one evaluating the translation of the CenteringPregnancy group prenatal care model into practice at the DMC, a revision of the ACNM Antepartum and Intrapartum Minimum Datasets and an exploration of women's experiences of In Vitro fertilization using an innovative participatory action research method, PhotoVoice. In 2004 , Mary Lewis, MS, CNM along with Sean Blackwell, MD and Jeanne Raisler, DrPH, CNM from the University of Michigan, analyzed 5 years of the Hutzel births attended by CNMs and MDs to answer the question "Cesarean section, operative vaginal delivery, and associated complications: Do the birth attendant and maternal characteristics make a difference?" (Raisler & Blackwell, 2004).

The Hutzel midwives have excelled at the practice and teaching components and in the future the research component will be strengthened as well. With the development of the new Research Committee, the research agenda will grow. Future goals for the research program include adding to the body of evidence-based practice through midwifery specific research, participating in multi-site midwifery research and forming a collaborative coalition with like midwifery practices to share research data and information.

#### **SUMMARY:**

With over 25 years of practice, the Hutzel midwives have taken this chance to reflect on the evolution and accomplishments and also to look forward to growing and continuing to provide care in partnership with the women and families of Detroit. The longevity of the Hutzel midwifery practice in a setting with multiple challenges is a testament to its ability to bend and grow yet, still hold strong the value of midwifery care.

The midwives continue to have the full support of the WSU College of Medicine OB/GYN Department and with the new WSU nurse-midwifery education program, have forged even stronger ties with the College of Nursing resulting in a renewed commitment to education and midwifery research. As part of an academic setting, the nurse-midwives are moving forward with strengthening their commitment to the three-part mission of practice, teaching and research. The future is bright as the midwives begin their second quarter century of practice at Hutzel Women's Hospital.



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