

SOME RESEARCH EVIDENCE ON THE SAFETY OF HOMEBIRTH

Some significant research articles which myth-bust on the risks of homebirth are discussed in the recently published book "*Better Birth: The Definitive Guide to Childbirth*" (2006) by Lareen Newman & Heather Hancock from South Australia (New Holland Publishers, Sydney Australia; available throughout Australia at Dymocks - see www.dymocks.com.au or for posting anywhere in the world from www.capersbookstore.com.au or www.birthinternational.com)

Page 135:

"In the past the "risky" image of home birth was perpetuated by government encouragement for hospital births,²⁶ but British government reports conclude that there is very little evidence to show that encouraging all women to birth in hospital is the best policy^{27, 28} In comparison, there is now much research from Australia, Europe and North America showing that for low risk women a *planned* home birth with a professional and experienced midwife is as safe as, if not safer than, a hospital birth – at home there is less risk of infection, less risk of intervention such as unnecessary episiotomies or caesareans, less risk of bleeding after the birth, and less postnatal depression; the likelihood of the mother or baby being injured or dying at a *planned* homebirth are usually the same (if not lower) than if they were in hospital.²⁹⁻³³

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A 1993 British government report concluded that: There is no convincing or compelling evidence that hospitals give a better guarantee of the safety of the majority of mothers and babies. It is possible, but not proven, that the contrary may be the case [ie homebirth may be the safer option].

The associated references for this extract are:

²⁶ R Campbell & A MacFarlane (1994). *Where To Be Born: The Debate and The Evidence*. National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit, Oxford, 2nd edition

²⁷ Department of Health Expert Maternity Group (1993). *Changing Childbirth 1. The Cumberland Report*. HMSO, London.

²⁸ G Young, E Hey, A MacFarlane, R McCandlish, R Campbell & G Chamberlain (2000), 'Choosing between home and hospital delivery', *British Medical Journal*, 320 (March), p798.

²⁹ TA Wieggers, MJ Keirse, J van der Zee & GAH Berghs (1996), 'Outcome of planned home and planned hospital births in low risk pregnancies: prospective study in midwifery practices in the Netherlands', *British Medical Journal*, 313, pp1309-1313.

³⁰ L Mehl (1976), 'Home birth versus hospital birth: comparisons of outcomes of matched populations', Report presented before the 104th annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, 20 October 1976.

³¹ L Mehl, G Peterson, N S Shaw & D Creavy (1978), 'Outcomes of 1146 elective home births: a series of 1146 cases', *Journal of Reproductive Medicine*, 19, pp281-90.

³² KC Johnson & B Daviss (2005), 'Outcomes of planned home births with certified professional midwives: large prospective study in North America', *British Medical Journal*, 330: 1416 [online] at bmj.com.

³³ HC Woodcock et al (1990), 'An epidemiological study of planned homebirths in Western Australia 1981-1987', Department of Health, Perth.

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