AIMS For a better birth...

News Roundup

AIMS Journal 2015, Vol 27 No 1

Withdrawal of insurance for VBAC

In Ireland the private midwifery group, Neighbourhood Midwives posted on its website that: 'It is with deep regret that some clients that had hoped to be cared for by our service have had to be informed that this care cannot currently be provided by our service. This only applies to clients that previously had a caesarean section. [...] The unfortunate withdrawal of insurance for HBAC is due to global policy change of the insurers for reasons external to the UK and Republic of Ireland.'. The group stated that this was beyond its control and as AIMS has pointed out, this is one of the many problems with private health care and the introduction of insurance companies - which then dictate practice. Only a fully accountable, state funded health service can avoid this problem. www.neighbourhoodmidwives.com/hbac-insurance

Midwife with excellent safety record suspended

Philomena Canning, self-employed midwife in Dublin, with 30 years experience, had her HSE indemnity revoked at the end of 2014 without explanation or investigation leaving 29 mothers in her care without a midwife. This followed two homebirths where the mothers were admitted to hospital after birth and later discharged. Both mothers and babies were well, and support Ms Canning.

Mothers, birth activists, midwives, and others were at the High court hearing to support Ms Canning. Krysia Byrne of AIMSI (AIMS Ireland) said: 'We have had many cases of women being subject to horrible conditions and procedures under obstetric care, including the recent deaths that the press are still highlighting, yet the medical professionals in question are, for the most part, still in practice [...] yet a midwife with 30 years of safe births under her belt is removed from practice without any notice before an investigation even starts. It's a scandalous double standard.' She continued: 'This HSE witch hunt cannot be allowed to continue.' www.parent.ie/hse-witchhunt

RCM members vote to take industrial action

Last September, for the first time in its history, the RCM balloted its English members about industrial action, because of poor conditions and low wages: 'The RCM is campaigning for a 1% pay increase as recommended by the NHS Pay Review Body; an above inflation pay rise for 2015-16; and a commitment to future pay rises that will restore the value of NHS pay. Of over 10,000 midwives who voted, 82% were in favour of the strike.' AIMS supported the RCM's demand for fairer rewards for midwives. Following

negotiations with the Department of Health it appears that a settlement has been reached and that midwives, along with other health professionals, will receive a 1% pay rise and other gains. www.rcm.org.uk/news-views-and-analysis/news/industrialaction- suspended-as-rcm-and-other-health-unions-reach

Criminalising pregnant women?

The court of Appeal ruled that drinking in pregnancy is not a crime. A council in the Nor th West of England had taken a woman to court after her baby was born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome as it hoped to claim criminal injuries compensation forthe child. The British Pregnancy Advisory Service (bpas) and birthrights intervened in the case because they believed it would establish a legal precedent which could be used to prosecute women who drink while pregnant and would do nothing for the health of alcoholic mothers and their babies.

This is a crucial ruling because it confirms, at least for now, that in these circumstances women must be able to make their own decisions about their pregnancies.

Hungarian midwife still facing court proceedings

Dr Ágnes Geréb was arrested over four years ago. She spent 70 days in prison and over three years under strict house arrest. This was relaxed slightly last year for health reasons.

Spokesperson Donal Kerry said: 'In the birth case incidents currently before the court all the birthing mothers involved support Ã?gnes and it is now expected that the court verdicts will be delivered sometime in 2015. [...] In the meantime, national and international support has remained consistently strong for Ã?gnes and for the rights of birthing mothers and midwives in Hungary [...] We will continue to keep all supporters updated on the situation of Ágnes as her treatment is also rightly seen to be inextricably linked to the future rights of birthing mothers and midwives in Hungary.'

For information and to send messages of support:www.facebook.com/pages/Podpora-pro-%C3%81gnes- Ger%C3%A9b-support-for-%C3%81gnes-Ger%C3%A9b/1 39577179421729

Blow for human rights

The European court of Human Rights gave its judgement in the case of DubskÃ¡ v Czech Republic in December. birthrights commented that: 'The Court found that Czech legislation prohibiting midwives attendance at home births did not interfere with women's right to private life under Article 8 of the European Convention. The decision came as a surprise to maternity professionals and campaigners across Europe, who had welcomed the Court's previous decision in Ternovszky v Hungary which enshrined an obligation on the state to respect women's choice of place of birth.'

A full commentary is available on www.birthrights.org.uk/2014/12/dubska-v-czech-republica- blow-to-womens-reproductive-rights-in-europe