AIMS For a better birth...

Doris Buttry Haire

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Doris Buttry Haire died peacefully at her and her husband's home in Charlottesville Virginia on 7th June 2014 at the age of 88.

She was the President of the American Foundation for Maternal and Child Health, the AIMS contact in the United States of America; a medical sociologist with an honorary doctorate in medical science, the Founder of the International Childbirth Education Association in1972, on the first Board of the National Women's Health Network in 1976, and a world renowned authority on maternity care.

In 1972 she published her landmark work *TheCultural Warping of Childbirth* which was well ahead of its time and should be read by everyone today, as much of what she questioned still needs to bequestioned now. She was particularly concerned and interested in the adverse effects of medicalised birth, unevaluated medical technology, especially ultrasound and the effects of drugs in labour. She produced another landmark publication, *How the F.D.A. Determines the 'Safety' of Drugs - Just How Safe is 'Safe'?*, testified at three Congressional hearings on obstetric care and instigated an investigation into the Federal Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) regulating practices. She provided the FDA with data which resulted in the Administration removing its approval of oxytocin for the elective induction of labour in 1978. During the 1980s she brought over to the UK a video about the impact of ultrasound on cells. The interference on cells exposed to ultrasound was shocking and this provoked particular interest from AIMS in this largely unevaluated technology.

As the Founder of the Alliance for the Improvement of Maternity Services (AIMS) in the USA she vigorously promoted parents' rights, publishing the *Pregnant Patient's Bill of Rights*. She successfully fought for a *Professional Midwifery Practice Act* which enabled midwives to have their own State Board of Midwifery and practice midwifery separate from nursing and obstetrics. She played a significant role in establishing New York's *Maternity Information Act* which requires hospitals to publish their intervention rates annually.

These are but a few of her many papers and activities. Other publications listed on the AIMS USA site (www.aimsusa.org) include *Implementing Family Centered Maternity Care with a Central Nursery*, *Drugs in Labor and Birth*, *Improving the Outcome of Pregnancy Through the Increased Utilization of Midwives*, *Maternity Care and Outcomes in a High-risk Service: the North Central Bronx Hospital Experience* and *Fetal Effects of Ultrasound – a Growing Controversy*.

She has variously been described as a 'true trailblazer', 'foremother' and 'leader' in mobilising pressure for change in childbirth practices. For over 40 years, campaigning tirelessly for improvements in maternity care, lecturing all over the world (she visited over 75 countries to meet parents, practitioners and observe maternity care), she was quietly supported by her loving husband of 68 years, John, who arranged all her international trips and itineraries, as she could be a little scatty at times. It was he and Doris who funded the first International Confederation of Midwives Conference in the US.

She was a generous friend who, when we discovered we were attending the same conference would offer to share a room, not that she needed to, but it was her quiet way of contributing to the stretched finances

of AIMS. She was a gentle, generous, tour de force and she will be sorely missed.

Beverley A Lawrence Beech