

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

DONA International Statement on H1N1 - Mothers being denied support in labor -

Jasper, IN (November 4, 2009)

Hospitals all over North America are bracing for the unclear threat that the H1N1 virus may pose this flu season. Maternity units everywhere are contemplating what this may mean to women in labor and certainly newborns who are potentially being exposed to the virus.

While some hospital systems are making the drastic move to severely limit the number of support people women can have with them during labor, DONA International is calling for a reassessment of the doula client's rights to have the labor support they desire and deserve.

“Some hospital systems are forcing women to choose between their partner and their doula. This move is causing many women a great deal of stress and anxiety. It is illogical to believe that having an additional professional support person will significantly increase the risk to the mother or the baby. In the same way that we will continue to have nurses available to care for the mother's medical needs, we must allow women to get the emotional and physical support they require. Doulas have for many years been considered an integral part of the birthing team, and this has not changed simply because there's a new viral threat” says Susan Toffolon, President of DONA International.

DONA International is urging hospital systems to reconsider any policy that would exclude this crucial support person. DONA certified doulas and those working towards certification can provide documentation supporting their doula status. DONA International acknowledges the desire of all medical professionals to function in a way that reduces the potential complications from H1N1, but it does not believe that eliminating doula support is the answer. Doulas with flu-like symptoms should be calling upon their backup doulas to fill in for them and should be avoiding all contact with pregnant women and newborns.

Doulas work as a team with physicians and midwives in hospitals and in home births. A birth doula is a professional labor support person who accompanies women in labor to provide emotional support, physical comfort and information to help clients feel fully informed. Birth doulas can provide reassurance and perspective and help with relaxation, comforting touch and positioning. Birth doulas also facilitate communication between the woman, her partner and her caregivers.

DONA International suggests doulas adopt additional safety and health measures, including:

- Frequent hand washing
- Avoid touching your nose, eyes or mouth
- Sneeze and cough into a tissue, or if one is not available, your arm rather than your hand
- Stay home if you have any symptoms (cough, fever, fatigue, sore throat, headache, runny nose, vomiting, diarrhea)
- Research your vaccine options
- Talk to the members of your health care team about ways to boost your immune system, which may include vitamin C, vitamin D, drinking enough water, cod liver oil, apple cider vinegar, getting adequate rest and certain homeopathic or herbal remedies.

About DONA International

DONA International is the oldest and largest doula association in the world with approximately 2,800 certified birth and postpartum doulas and over 7,000 members. This international, non-profit organization supports doulas by providing quality training and meaningful certification.

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