

Nurse midwife finds niche in health care

Midwife

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women were birthing and just felt that the whole process could be improved. So, I decided that I wanted to make it different and to make a difference," she said.

As a midwife, Jones has several goals for her clients.

"I want each client to be in charge of her experience — in charge of when things happen and how things happen. We ask permission before we examine a client or her infant. We give clients the responsibility for the experience after we educate them about the risks so they can go in with open eyes," she said.

Jones also said she is an advocate of having a newborn infant stay with its mother during the first hours of life and said she believes newborns should be treated very gently.

"I think we often do not give babies the respect they deserve, particularly in the way they are handled after birth," she said. "Babies should begin life with their parents and should be treated with love and respect, with sensitivity and caring.

"Many babies do not cry at birth if they are born into a quiet, dimly-lit and warm environment.

"The way we traditionally had dried them and suctioned them made newborns push away and cry out of fear and anger," the midwife said. "If you think about it, that anger is the first emotion they may experience as they leave the womb. It's an imprinting time and a feeling that can last forever."

The midwife encourages her clients to trust their bodies and do what their instincts tell them — bringing a newborn into the world gently, quietly and holding them close, talking to them in quiet tones and comforting them as they become accustomed to their new environment.

Her experience encourages her to continue sharing her philosophy with others.

"My statistics have been excellent," she said. "I have a C-section rate of three percent, which is well under the national average. I don't see premature infants or women on insulin or with toxemia. A lot of those statistics come from giving women a lot of time, as much information as we can . . . and a lot of caring." ✦

By ALICE ADAMS

Twenty years ago, Pat Jones began her career as a nurse midwife — the only midwife practicing outside a hospital in Houston.

Today, more than 1,100 babies later, Jones still has a strong calling and there are a number of nurse midwives in Houston who have developed their own practices.

"Midwifery is more acceptable today," said Jones. "More and more clients are choosing to go to midwives and the public is much more educated about the level of care available through a midwife."

Certified nurse-midwives are independent practitioners licensed in both disciplines of nursing and midwifery. They are graduates of nationally accredited advanced educational programs, hold national board certification, maintain professional liability insurance and participate in continuing education programs.

In addition to attending labors

and delivering babies ("attending births"), nurse-midwives provide a wide range of care, including complete prenatal care, family planning, treatment and counseling for sexually transmitted diseases, gynecological care, cancer screening, yearly physicals, and menopause counseling.

In her practice, Jones emphasizes that she wants to spend time with her clients.

"The initial visit is three hours in length and on subsequent visits, we spend at least 45 minutes answering questions, focusing on nutrition and working toward a positive outcome, whatever that client's stage of life," she said. "This holistic approach gives us the opportunity to find out about every factor that may be influencing their health or state of mind."

Jones began her career as a child-birth educator, serving as one of the first Lamaze instructors in the city.

"I began watching the way

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