

Ancient practice has modern appeal

Richmond midwife tries to expand midwifery division

by Kira Meixner

Contributor

Demand for an old practice is higher than supply and Richmond is trying to catch up.

It is almost 10 years after midwifery was legalized in B.C., and there are currently only two registered midwives in Richmond.

"Ever since we first had regulated midwives in British Columbia in January of 1998, there's been more demand than there are midwives available," said Jane Kiltz, registrar and executive director at the College of Midwives of B.C.

Esther Ohajekwe-Aneke was the first registered midwife to be granted privileges at Richmond Hospital in 2002. Jane Wines gained privileges in 2005.

Together, they applied to create their own division of midwifery under the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Richmond Hospital. Their application was granted in May of this year, and Wines now heads the division. Wines also runs a clinic in Tsawwassen where she lives, and Ohajekwe-Aneke runs the only midwifery clinic in Richmond, located at 8100 Granville St.

"Most women don't know the extent of what we do," Ohajekwe-Aneke said. "We need to educate people of

it because most women don't know much about midwifery."

Midwives take care of women during pregnancy and birth and up to six weeks after the babies are born. They check to make sure the baby is growing well, and all of its vital signs are normal.

Ohajekwe-Aneke said midwives do all the things general practitioners do, and more. Because midwives are paid for a full course of care—from early pregnancy through to six weeks postpartum—they can spend 30 to 45 minutes with patients per visit and extend their care after birth. General practitioners would like to be able to do this, but they are paid per visit, she said. Midwifery care is completely covered by the Medical Services Plan in B.C.

When under the care of a midwife, a woman has the choice to deliver her baby at a hospital or at home, and the midwife will con-

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Esther Ohajekwe-Aneke is one of two midwives to have privileges at Richmond Hospital.

tinue to provide services after birth.

"After (a woman) births her baby, the midwife follows her until six weeks," Ohajekwe-Aneke said. "She has access to the midwife 24-7. If it's an emergency, the woman expects to hear from us within 15 minutes, if it's not an emergency, she hears from us within 24 hours."

With only two midwives in Richmond, Ohajekwe-Aneke has had to turn down some patients.

"The full load for a midwife to be comfortable is

four to five (patients) a month," she said.

Ohajekwe-Aneke hopes to expand the division by bringing in more midwives, and eventually establish a separate midwifery department.

"We anticipate to have a total of four to six midwives by the end of the year," she said. "The long range goal is that we have a department as our number increases..."

There are currently 116 midwives in active practice who are registered with the college.