Resource Column

Web Site Resources for Waterbirth

Kristen S. Montgomery, PhD, RN

KRISTEN MONTGOMERY is an assistant professor in the College of Nursing at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina.

Abstract

In this column, the author reviews Web sites that provide information and resources on waterbirth.

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In recent years pregnant women, families, and health care providers have increasingly expressed interest in learning more about waterbirth. Consumers and providers alike are interested in what options are available for waterbirths, whether or not a waterbirth is safe, how the waterbirth is handled, what equipment is necessary, and where waterbirths can take place. This resource column includes Web sites that address these questions. The Web sites listed below were selected to provide comprehensive and balanced information. However, to date, only minimal research on waterbirth exists and many sites currently available on the Web may not offer complete, medically based information. In addition, many sites only include limited information on the waterbirth itself; instead, these sites are interested in gaining sales or rentals of waterbirth tubs and equipment through the Web rather than serving as an information resource. As always, the reader is encouraged to carefully scrutinize any Web sites that are viewed.

An International Collaboration: Water Immersion During Labor/Birth

- http://www.sheilakitizinger.com/WaterBirth_Collab.htm

This Web site is a letter to physicians and midwives regarding a collaborative project to collect consistent

data on water immersion during labor and birth. The site offers a tool (in Excel format) to provide a consistent mechanism for collecting data to develop guidelines for the use of waterbirth and for any safety issues identified with the procedure. Data is sent to Oxford Brookes University in the United Kingdom. Research midwife Ethel Burns developed this collaborative project. The letter is dated June 2003. A form with contact information is available for providers who wish to participate.

Global Maternal/Child Health Association and Waterbirth International Web Site

- <http://www.waterbirth.org>

The Global Maternal/Child Health Association (GMCHA) and Waterbirth International Web site offers a resource and referral service that is appropriate for professional caregivers and consumers. Founded in 1988 as a non-profit organization, GMCHA provides information on “the gentle birth choice of laboring and giving birth in water.” Major sections of this Web site include the following: an online store (videos, books, CDs, and more); portable pool rental and sales (along with protocols, consents, and legal forms for those who want to start their own pool-rental business); hospital pools; a photo gallery; birth stories; answers to frequently-asked questions; a response to the inquiry, “Why waterbirth?”; information about GMCHA; a bibliography; a listing of conferences; online referrals; and useful links. This compilation provides a great wealth of information and resources. Overall, the site is easy to use and provides clear and concise information for the user.

Our Waterbirth Decision

- <http://www.thelaboroflove.com/forum/water>

This is a single Web page of one couple’s story regarding their decision-making process in choosing a

waterbirth for their baby. It is part of a larger site (www.thelaboroflove.com) that offers information on conception, pregnancy, and parenting.

Sheila Kitzinger’s Waterbirth Information

- <http://www.sheilakitinger.com/WaterBirth.htm>

This link is one section of the overall Web site belonging to Sheila Kitzinger, a noted social anthropologist well known for her work in pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding. The section on waterbirth features information on ordering an “evidence-based set of practical guidelines for midwives on using water in labour and birth.” Unfortunately, these guidelines are not available online; they are only available for purchase. The site also features photos with other useful resources, including books and articles. However, the “articles” section would benefit from being updated (the most recent reference is from the year 2000). The site lists organizations that focus on birth and includes links to each organization’s home page. Though based out of the United Kingdom, this Web site offers links to other countries and provides relevant information for purchasing books worldwide. Kitzinger’s home page also features information about her work (including articles she has written), birth images, books, home birth, mothers and babies in prison, birth crisis, and current news. Overall, the site is easy to use and informative.

Waterbirth Drowning Risk

- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/2173451.stm>

This link directs the reader to an August 5, 2002, British Broadcasting Corporation news report that describes a study published in the journal *Pediatrics*. The report provides balanced information and highlights some of the potential complications that could occur with a poorly managed waterbirth.