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American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist (ACOG) Names Doula Support as Associated with Improved Outcomes for Women in Labor

CHICAGO, IL (February 2017) – The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist has once again endorsed improved maternal/fetal health outcomes for doula support in labor. The committee opinion report titled ***Approaches to Limit Intervention During Labor and Birth*** released this month highlights several factors that can lead to improved outcomes and higher patient satisfaction for women in labor. Additionally, the report was endorsed by *The American College of Nurse–Midwives and the Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses*.

The report states:

Evidence suggests that, in addition to regular nursing care, continuous one-to-one emotional support provided by support personnel, such as a doula, is associated with improved outcomes for women in labor. Benefits found in randomized trials include shortened labor, decreased need for analgesia, fewer operative deliveries, and fewer reports of dissatisfaction with the experience of labor (1, 17). As summarized in a Cochrane evidence review, a woman who received continuous support was less likely to have a cesarean delivery (RR, 0.78; 95% CI, 0.67–0.91) or a newborn with a low 5-minute Apgar score (fixed-effect, RR, 0.69; 95% CI, 0.50–0.95) (1). Continuous support for a laboring woman that is provided by a nonmedical person also has a modest positive effect on shortening the duration of labor (mean difference –0.58 hours; 95% CI, –0.85 to –0.31) and improving the rate of spontaneous vaginal birth (RR, 1.08; 95% CI, 1.04–1.12) (1).

Also included in the report were recommendations on delaying hospital admission in the latent phase of labor, suggestions for using nonpharmacologic pain management techniques (for pain or fatigue in latent labor) including massage or water immersion, frequent position changes to enhance maternal comfort and optimal fetal position, as well as recommendations for hand-held Doppler devices for fetal monitoring in healthy labors.

Founded nearly 25 years ago, DONA International is the largest and longest-standing doula association in the world offering leading-edge, evidence based education and certification programs to support the professional development of birth and postpartum doulas. DONA International promotes the highest quality perinatal support for birthing mothers and their families by setting the standard for doula education and training, and by advocating the research-based benefits of doula care.

As mentioned in this report, countless scientific trials examining doula care demonstrate remarkably improved physical and psychological outcomes for both mother and baby, thereby positively impacting the wellbeing of the entire family. DONA International looks forward to continued collaboration with US medical care providers to improve health outcomes for birthing families.

The vision of DONA International remains *a doula for every person who wants one*.

For more information visit www.dona.org.