

Gisela Becker has been delivering babies since she completed her midwifery education in Berlin, Germany, over 30 years ago. Her work has taken her to many parts of Canada—Alberta, Quebec, Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and now Newfoundland and Labrador. She's the first officially registered midwife in the province, but her main job isn't to bring new life into the world—it's to help bring new midwives to Newfoundland and Labrador and set up a network of regulated midwives across the province.

Midwives are health-care professionals who provide care to mothers during low-risk pregnancies and deliveries. They often provide care for the first six weeks of a newborn's life as well. In Canada, several universities offer direct entry (no undergraduate degree required) programs in midwifery, including the University of British Columbia, Laurentian University, and McMaster University.

Like physicians, midwives can order diagnostic tests, such as blood tests, and have hospital admitting privileges. Although midwives may help mothers deliver babies at home, most midwife facilitated deliveries in Canada occur in hospitals. Although provincial health programs usually pay for a patient to have a midwife or physician, not both, midwives do consult with physicians, such as obstetricians and pediatricians, as needed. In cases where a pregnancy increases in risk due to complications assessed by the midwife, the patient is transferred to a physician.

In provinces where midwifery has long been established, many infants are born with the help of a midwife. In British Columbia, for instance, almost 25 percent of births in 2015–2016 were midwife-assisted. In Newfoundland, however, the only places where midwifery has been practised recently are the remote communities of Goose Bay and St. Anthony. In these locations, the provincial government has allowed several nurses with midwifery training to serve as midwives. While it has been legal to practise as a midwife in Newfoundland and Labrador since 2010, it wasn't until 2016 that the provincial government set up regulations that outline the qualifications and training midwives require to practise in the province. However, there is a difference between putting regulations on paper and getting a network of regulated midwives up and running. That's where Gisela Becker comes in. Together with the province's four regional health authorities, the College of Midwives in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Association of Midwives in Newfoundland and Labrador, she has been working to determine the best way to integrate midwives into the provincial health-care system.

One of the first steps has been to set up programs in which midwifery is integrated into a hospital setting. In 2018, Becker began work on establishing midwives at the rural James Paton Memorial Hospital in Gander. Work includes not only setting up policies that will guide the project, but also recruiting midwives. Another challenge has been to determine how midwives and hospital obstetrics staff will work together. While it will take some time for the program to become established in Gander, the effort will be worth it, as the new midwives will provide much needed support to the region's obstetricians. Becker will also be setting up programs on the Avalon Peninsula and in Labrador. The plan is to bring midwives to all health regions in the province.



Other Careers Related to Conception and Childbirth

Obstetrician-Gynecologist Physicians who work as obstetrician-gynecologists (OB/GYNs) specialize in pregnancy and childbirth (obstetrics), as well as female general and reproductive health (gynecology). Routine tasks can include delivering newborns, diagnosing and treating reproductive diseases and disorders, and performing surgical techniques, such as Caesarian sections and endoscopies. OB/GYNs have a medical degree and have completed a 5-year residency (post-degree training). They may also complete sub-specialty training, for instance in cancer care or infertility.

Obstetrics-Gynecology Nurse Obstetrics-gynecology (OB/GYN) nurses work with women during pregnancy, delivery, and shortly after birth. They also provide care for newborns after delivery. Duties include taking patient history, performing clinical exams and monitoring vital signs, and carrying out delivery-related screenings and other medical tests. OB/GYN nurses may also work with women with other gynecological issues, such as hormone imbalances and reproductive system cancers. OB/GYN nurses may have additional training in labour, delivery, or infant care. At larger hospitals, they may specialize in caring for newborns in intensive care.

Clinical Embryologist Clinical embryologists help couples who are having difficulties conceiving. This involves working with issues related to both male and female infertility, including assessing patient history, arranging clinical tests, and advising on fertility treatments. Clinical embryologists also apply fertility techniques such as in vitro fertilization. Related responsibilities include harvesting and storing eggs and sperm, and implanting embryos once fertilized. Clinical embryologists usually work in fertility clinics or in hospitals. They often have a PhD in clinical embryology or a related field such as reproductive science, although some have a master's degree or MD.

Doula Doulas are trained to provide emotional and physical support to mothers and families during delivery and the post-partum (after birth) period. While birth doulas focus on providing support during labour and childbirth, post-partum doulas may assist with newborn care, support new mothers emotionally and physically, and help couples transition into parenthood. Although doulas are trained and certified by colleges and other training centres, they are not considered health-care professionals and their services do not receive provincial health-care funding.

QUESTIONS

1.) When did it become legal to practice midwifery in Newfoundland? _____

2.) When did the provincial government set up regulations for midwifery? _____

3.) What is the name of the hospital where midwifery began in Newfoundland?

4.) Where is the hospital located? _____

5.) What education do you need to be an Obstetrician-Gynecologist Physicians?

6.) What are routine tasks for Obstetrician-Gynecologist Physicians?

7.) Where do Obstetrics-Gynecology Nurse work in large hospitals?

8.) What do Clinical Embryologist do?

9.) Where do Clinical Embryologist work and what type of education do they have?

10.)What do Doulas do?
