

Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Genetic Counselors and Genetic Testing Among Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) in Vermont: A Qualitative Study

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Increasingly, women in the US are choosing to give at birth at home, and certified professional midwives often attend these births. This is a trend worthy of continued evaluation as it has the potential to decrease unnecessary medical interventions and their associated health care costs, as well as improve maternal satisfaction with care (de Jonge et al., 2015; Cheyney, 2011; Lothian 2009). However, there is evidence that the benefits of home birth are contingent upon the education and skill of midwives, along with their integration into the health care system as a whole (Renfrew et al., 2014). Certified professional midwives (CPMs) may have limited and informal medical training, which complicates the ease of referring to and working with other providers. The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of CPMs toward genetic counselors and genetic counseling services. Using semi-structured interviews, we identified three key themes: 1) systems-level issues with accessing information about genetic counseling and genetic testing; 2) practice-level patterns in information delivery and self-awareness about knowledge limitations; 3) and client-level concerns about the value of genetic testing relative to difficulties with access and stress caused by the information. The results of this study will be used to develop aids, requested by several CPMs, that include information about genetic testing and genetic counseling access in the state of Vermont.