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HOME SWEET HOME BIRTH :

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE

PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF HOME BIRTH

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of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The management of pregnancy and childbirth, and the home as a location of birth, are all topics subject to considerable debate. Such debate often relies on emotive appeal rather than reference to relevant research.

A series of three interviews were conducted with seven women planning home births. The most important reasons why women decided to have a home birth were the desire to have an established relationship with their midwife, wanting continuity of care from their midwife, wanting family involvement in the birth and wishing to retain control and avoid interventions.

Postnatally, in most instances, high levels of satisfaction were expressed by women about the quantity and quality of information they received, the care they received from health professionals, their satisfaction with the birth experience and with their relationships with health professionals. Most women did not experience feelings of loss of control at the birth and the majority of women did not experience feelings of depression postnatally.

Women's perceptions of pregnancy and childbirth were in accordance with the midwifery model of childbirth and it is proposed that women seeking home births hold a deeper and more encompassing belief in the tenets of the midwifery model in comparison to women who have hospital births. Findings are also in accordance with other research, both national and international.

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GLOSSARY

Apgar score One minute and five minutes after birth all babies are assessed using this scoring system. The Apgar score provides a rapid assessment of the baby's condition and is based on a baby's heart rate, respiratory effort, muscle tone, grimace (reflex irritability) and colour. The range goes from zero to ten. Ten is the maximum score, although rarely achieved. A score of five or below means the infant is depressed and at the five minute assessment can be associated with residual neurologic damage or even neonatal death.

Domiciliary midwife Strictly speaking this term applies to any midwife who provides antenatal, intrapartum, or post-partum care to a woman in their own home. For the purposes of this thesis, however, it will be used exclusively for midwives practicing as home birth midwives. Hence, in this thesis the terms domiciliary and home birth midwife/midwives are synonymous.

Independent midwife A term applying to any self-employed midwife. In this thesis it applies to midwives who provide antenatal and postnatal care in the home and who also provide women with intrapartum care in the hospital.

Epidural Lumbar epidural injection of local anaesthetic. Narcotics which numb the lower half of the body are given by continuous infusion in the epidural space. Commonly used for pain control in obstetric practice.

PNMR	Perinatal mortality rate
MMR	Maternal mortality rate
MHBA	Manawatu Home Birth Association
ARM	Artificial rupture of the membranes
GA	General anaesthetic
Oxytocin	A drug to stimulate uterine contractions
Episiotomy	Incision into the perineum in the second stage of labour
GPU	General practitioner unit
Margaret	Pseudonym used for all midwives
Richard	Pseudonym used for all doctors

[...] Indicates words have been left out of a sentence

[....] Indicates a sentence missing between sentences

[] With a word inside the brackets means that word has been added to a quote to aid comprehension