Midwives: Champions for all women from adolescence to menopause
By Maj. Lisa Gonzales and Katherine Coughlin, Certified Nurse Midwives, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center

LANDSTUHL REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER, Germany – Midwifery has been mentioned since the very beginning in stories, on cave walls and in literature. After all, midwife means with woman. Nurse midwives have been practicing in the United States since the 1920s. You may think that midwives only support mothers giving birth in the home setting, but did you know that they can care for women from adolescence to menopause?

Additionally, midwives practice in hospitals, birthing centers, private practices and serve in the military. In 2016, there were 11,475 board certified midwives in the United States and approximately 100 of them were active duty midwives, several are even men.

A Certified Nurse Midwife is a Registered Nurse who completed either a master’s or doctoral degree at an accredited midwifery program. CNMs are recognized as independent health care providers with authority to prescribe medication throughout the United States and its territories.

Nurse midwives are well known for attending births, but they also educate patients about pregnancy, nutrition, parenting and newborn care. In addition, CNMs can provide primary care services, annual exams and reproductive care, such as prescribing contraception and treats some gynecologic concerns.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the percentage of births attended by midwives has increased every year since 1989. In 2014, midwives attended around 330,000, up more than 11 percent from 2005.

**Big news for first time parents**

“I am really glad we saw a midwife today, they are experts in their field,” said Caitlyn Schafer, who just found out she was pregnant during her appointment with Air Force CNM Maj. Lisa Gonzales Sept. 28 at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. “What better way to feel taken care of than with someone who has focused their education and experience on exactly what I’m going through right now...especially for the first time.”
“Especially with twins,” exclaimed her husband, Sgt. Carl Shafer of the 10th Army Air & Missile Defense Command, who was still smiling after hearing the big news.

**Midwives in the KMC**

“We are so lucky to have nine Certified Nurse Midwives here in the local Kaiserslautern Military Community to help our patients,” said Gonzales.

CNMs also hold leadership positions around the KMC, LRMC Deputy Commander for Nursing Army Col. Michelle Munroe, 86th Medical Squadron Chief Nurse Col. Regina Paden, 30th Medical Brigade Chief Nurse Col. Robin Neumeier are all in leadership positions and see patients as well.


“Together, we bring more than 100 years of experience as Certified Nurse Midwives to our patients in the KMC area,” said Gonzales. “That translates into a great team of very knowledgeable CNMs that our patients can turn to for help.”

Gonzales explained that National Midwifery Week, Oct. 1-7, is a special time to celebrate the work of midwives and midwifery. Midwives will experience a day of pampering and relaxation as well as a traditional blessing of the hands ceremony, a symbolic way to ask that the hands that work so hard will continue doing their good work.

Of course, midwives thrive in their work and will use their week of recognition to also educate the public and answer questions at two community outreach events. Visit with CNMs during a “Meet the Midwives” event at the Kaiserslautern Military Community Center on Ramstein Sept. 30 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. or stop by the “Ask the Midwife” forum at the LRMC dining facility Oct. 5 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For more information on LRMCs OB/GYN clinic and services provided, please visit [https://rhce.amedd.army.mil/landstuhl](https://rhce.amedd.army.mil/landstuhl).

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Caitlyn Schafer and her husband Sgt. Carl Shafer of the 10th Army Air & Missile Defense Command share their excitement about the big news they received from Certified Nurse Midwife Air Force Maj. Lisa Gonzales during an appointment Sept. 28 at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. Not only did the Schafers find out that they
would soon become first-time parents, but they were surprised to learn that they are pregnant with twins. Certified Nurse Midwives like Gonzales provide a wide range of healthcare to women from adolescence through menopause and are often a part of the care team for some of the most important moments in women’s lives.