

BirthNet

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gaskin to Speak about Ulcer Drug Used on Pregnant Women to Induce Labor

Ina May Gaskin, Certified Professional Midwife (CPM) and President of the Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA), will be the keynote speaker at the MANA North Atlantic Regional Conference on June 9, 2001 at Camp Deer Park near Port Jervis, New York. Gaskin's workshop, entitled "Routes of Induction and the Cytotec Dilemma," will describe the use of the stomach-ulcer drug, Cytotec, for labor induction and why this practice should end.

Cytotec (generic name misoprostol) is an ulcer medication that is being used by doctors and midwives across the country to induce labor in pregnant women. Cytotec is taken orally or inserted vaginally to soften the cervix and cause uterine contractions that are stronger and more frequent than normal labor. Gaskin contends that the use of Cytotec for labor induction has become a massive medical experiment involving thousands of unsuspecting and uninformed pregnant women and their babies.

Cytotec has become popular because of its cost and ease of its use. A 25mcg dose costs about 13 cents, while most other labor inducing drugs cost hundreds of dollars. Although induction is only medically necessary if the mother is overdue or at risk due to diabetes or high blood pressure, the use of Cytotec contributes to the increase in medically unnecessary inductions. The induction rate in this country has doubled in the last ten years to 17% or nearly 1 in 5 women.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) **has not approved** Cytotec for induction and has warned against its use for this purpose. The agency has received reports of 30 cases of uterine rupture and eight cases in which the baby died during Cytotec inductions over the past three years. In addition, the manufacturer of the drug, G.D. Searle Corporation, has inserted a warning into each package of Cytotec cautioning that Cytotec may cause uterine rupture, severe bleeding, infertility or death.

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The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists does not recommend Cytotec's use for women who have had previous cesareans due to a high risk of uterine rupture. The Cochrane Collaboration, an international organization that conducts up-to-date reviews of healthcare studies, has concluded that further research is necessary because of concerns about dosage and hyperstimulation of the uterus.

BirthNet is seeking to educate the public about Cytotec, so women can make informed decisions about their care. A survey of Capital District hospitals found that, out of eight hospitals surveyed in the area, three use Cytotec for labor induction, four do not, and one had no comment. One of the four, Albany Medical Center, discontinued its use after Searle's warning was published.

Ina May Gaskin will be speaking about Cytotec at the MANA regional conference at Camp Deer Park in Westbrookville, New York on June 9, 2001, at 9:15 am. Contact Susan Rannestad at 845-744-5534 for conference information or Ina May Gaskin at 1-888-923-MANA (6262) or at midwifeIM@aol.com for more information.

BirthNet educates the public about maternity care in order to improve it. We believe that birth is a normal, natural event in a woman's life; and we encourage women to learn about their rights and options. Our primary programs include education in the classroom (high school or college classes), community forums or workshops, and media outreach. For more information, please contact Maureen Murphy at 465-5087.

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