



Department of Anthropology

Why Anthropology Matters

"I believe we need to find ways to provide safe, affordable and empowering birthing care to all families, not simply for the sake of the mothers and babies in Oregon and the United States, but because much of what we do here is exported to other nations." Dr. Melissa Cheyney.

Improving Maternal and Infant Health Care

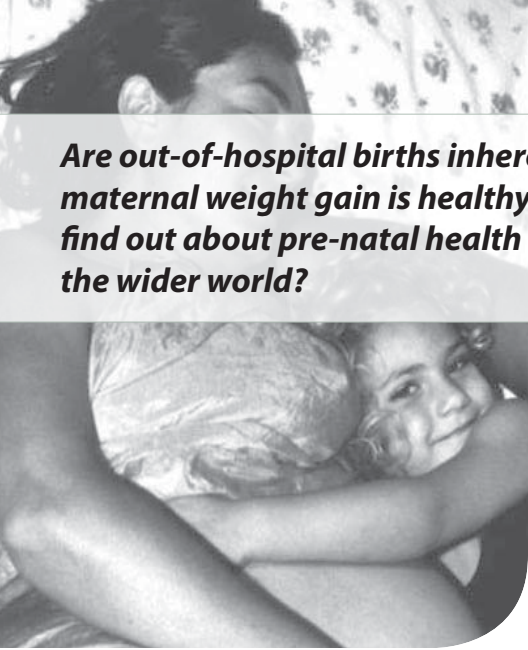


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Are out-of-hospital births inherently riskier? How much maternal weight gain is healthy? How do expecting mothers find out about pre-natal health care options in Oregon and the wider world?

Vital Questions

These questions are vital to the future health of our state and nation, and are at the heart of research being carried out by Oregon State University anthropologist and practicing midwife, Dr. Melissa Cheyney.


Dr. Cheyney's Research

In addition to attending home deliveries, Dr. Cheyney is actively involved in a variety of research studies aimed at improving maternal and child health. In the largest of these studies, Cheyney is collaborating with Oregon midwives, both licensed

and unlicensed, in order to compile information on all out-of-hospital births in the state. Cheyney and her colleagues will be able to use this database to make comparisons between state and national results. They can also document whether requiring midwives to be licensed has an effect on maternal and infant health outcomes. Equally important, Dr. Cheyney and her team will be able to make recommendations as to how midwifery education could be modified to help optimize access to safe, affordable and high-quality maternity services for all women.

Weight Gain Controversy

Although it is generally acknowledged that a woman requires a healthy diet during pregnancy, recommendations for maternal weight gain remain controversial, leading to mixed messages and conflicting



nutritional advice during pregnancy. This is one of the problems another of Dr. Cheyney's research projects is working to resolve. Cheyney's study explores models and practices about "healthy" diet and "appropriate" weight gain in order to evaluate the types of information women are receiving. She is particularly concerned to discover whether choosing different prenatal care options (midwifery or obstetrics) dramatically affects the kinds of information received. Cheyney's findings

from this study will be used to improve communication between midwives and allied health professionals. They will also help to insure that the best nutritional knowledge available gets into the hands of Oregon's expectant mothers.

Importance of Research

Dr. Cheyney sums up the vital importance of her research this way: "I believe we need to find ways to provide safe, affordable and empowering birthing care to all families, not simply for the sake of the mothers and babies in Oregon and the United States, but because much of what we do here is exported to other nations." The Department of Anthropology at Oregon State University is proud to play an important role in Dr. Cheyney's work.