

Ursula Ackermann-Liebrich, Katrin Guenter-Witt,  
Maja Zuellig, Isabelle Kunz,  
Thomas Voegeli, and study team

*Institut für Sozial- und Präventivmedizin der Universität Basel*

---

## Comparing home to hospital deliveries: Recruitment, referrals and neonatal outcome

**Aims:** To assess safety of delivery at home as compared to hospital in woman who chose home delivery in Zürich/Switzerland.

**Methods:** Between 1989 and 1991 all women attending prenatal care with one of the physicians or midwives of the study team were recruited for the study. In addition women attending prenatal care in one of the reference hospitals were taken into the study, if they had the characteristics to be matched with the women who intended to deliver at home. All women were followed through and until 4 months after delivery.

**Results:** 489 women intending home and 385 women intending hospital delivery were included in the study. Referrals during preg-

nancy (37) and delivery (70), change of mind (15 home to hospital and 8 hospital to home), 17 abortions (6 in intended home and 11 in intended hospital deliveries) resulted in 369 births taking place at home and 486 in hospitals. Two intended hospital births happened unattended outside. Perinatal death was recorded in 1 intended hospital and 1 intended home delivery (cp: PMR Zürich 1990: 7.9/1000). No difference was found in birthweight, gestational age, Apgar-scores and clinical examination of the babies immediately and two days after birth. Umbilical cord pH was significantly lower in births at home. But differences in clamping the cord and time of transportation of the samples have to be taken into account.

**Conclusion:** In women wishing to deliver at home there is little reason to dissuade them provided referral system is adequate to deal with emergencies. However only healthy, better educated women seem to be choosing this system. Before further recommendations can be made, the social factors influencing positive outcome ought to be studied in more detail.