Ep. 77: Ask a Midwife

Dr, Jessica Brumley, the current president of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) and an Associate Professor at the University of South Florida in the Department of OBGYN joins host Chris Stallman, CGC. Dr. Brumley addresses the most common questions she gets about midwives, who they serve (hint: it's not just pregnant people) and where you can learn more about midwives in your area.

Dr. Brumley has worked in her state on quality improvement work including the Promoting Intended Vaginal Delivery and Mother-Focused Care Initiatives. Her research has focused on group prenatal care implementation and human milk and lactation optimization. Dr Brumley is an internationally recognized expert in midwifery, physiologic birth, lactation, and respectful care.

Resources mentioned in this episode:

Find a Midwife

American College of Nurse-Midwives (midwife.org)

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You're listening to the MotherToBaby podcast, medications and more during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Ask the experts with your host, genetic counselor and mama for Chris Stallman.

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Welcome to another episode of the MotherToBaby podcast. My name is Chris Stallman, and I'm a genetic counselor, a mom of four, and a teratogen information specialist. So what that means is that I talk to people, so patients, family members, healthcare providers, about exposures that can happen before pregnancy, during pregnancy, while breastfeeding, and in cases of adoption.

And an exposure can be anything, so it could be a medication you take, it could be a vaccine, it could be something in your workplace, lots of different things can be exposures. And the good news is lots of different health care providers can also talk to you about exposures in pregnancy and breastfeeding.

In fact, our guest here today is here to talk with us about the important roles that midwives play in healthcare. Our guest today is here to talk with us about the important roles that midwives play in healthcare. Dr. Jessica Brumley is an internationally recognized expert in midwifery, physiologic birth, lactation, and respectful care.

She is the current president of the American College of Nurse Midwives and an associate professor at the University of South Florida in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Dr. Brumley has worked in her state on quality improvement work, including the promoting intended vaginal delivery and mother focused care initiatives.

Dr. Brumley, welcome to the show. Thank you so much for having me. It's our pleasure. Can you tell us about midwives as a profession and how they're different from other health care providers? Absolutely, happy to answer that. I think it's important to recognize that midwifery is a unique profession.

Sometimes it can seem to be mixed in with nursing and or medicine. Um, but really, um, midwives have been practicing since the beginning of times, right? Since we've been having babies, we've needed, um, support during that time. And our focus is really on the normal physiology, right? How our body normally changes during different stages of life.

So whether it's when we start menstruation, when we get pregnant, the stage of when we stop, right, having our menstrual cycle. All of those are normal phases and that is our focus on how do we optimize and how do we help to really support those normal processes that happen in a person's life. And then I also just like to remind people that, so we care for people not just in pregnancy but also outside of pregnancy.

Pregnancy and can help to provide care for mom and also the newborn during the first month of life. What is the most common question you receive as a midwife? Now, I know that there's lots and lots of those that could qualify. It's a very loaded question that I just asked, but what are some of the more common things that you speak with most patients about?

I've been in my practice for a long time and so we've built up a lot of awareness around the profession of midwifery. For a very long time, the most common question that I got was really just around what is a midwife and, oh, so does that mean you only deliver in homes or does that mean your patients can't get an epidural or these kinds of, I think, you know, misconceptions, um, that many people would often be surprised that I might come in with a lab coat on or, you know, look like other healthcare professionals, right, that were entering the space.

It wasn't sort of, um, it didn't meet their misconceptions. Um, and so we, we spent a lot of time building up awareness on, you know, the level of training that we get and, um, and the expertise that we have in this area. So let's take it in the other direction. What is the most unusual question that you have received as a midwife?

I think what's always really startling to me is how, um, People don't know, um, what, uh, about their body. And so I'm always really intrigued about the kinds of questions I get about things that are really, that I know are very normal, right? And so, um, you know, when, when, when somebody asks like, Oh, there's, there's, Does this look right?

Right? Or does this, you know, this is happening. Um, and I'm like, right. Uh huh. Yep. That's, you know, we deal with very intimate parts of somebody's anatomy and those are not the kinds of, um, the kinds of things that you often talk to your girlfriend about or your sister, your mom. And there's always these ideas around how things should feel and look and, and be.

And so, you know, if you're getting a random gray hair somewhere, somebody's like,

What the kinds of questions that they ask their midwife. Understood. That's, I, I think it's such a good question. It's such a great thing that there is someone that folks can ask because you say, you know, you may not talk about it with

other people in your lives or your partner and you know, but there you go.

I talked to my daughter about one thing, right? One of the, one of the things like as a, as a, I don't know, not a pet peeve of mine, but like a point that I often explain is about the number of holes that a woman has, right? you know, because you just one that urine comes out of and one where we have bowel movements from and another one where a baby comes out of or you have your menses out of.

And there's a lot of people who don't know that, right? Like adult grown people that don't know about the difference in their anatomy. And when I say it, she looked at me and she rolls her eyes and she goes, mom, everybody knows that. And I'm like, no, everybody doesn't know that. Oh, yeah. I mean, I love it. I love to explain things to people so they fully understand how their body works so they can take care of it the best to the best of their ability.

Yeah, absolutely. So as a midwife, what are some things that you would want every patient to know? Hmm. Uh, that you are in control. That it's always your voice. That should be centered and, and matters that you have the right to say no. Um, can you please answer these questions for me? I'm not ready right now.

Can we, can I take a moment? Right. Um, the reason why I went into midwifery was because I heard that this was a profession that could empower people during a very important time in their life. And that that meant that they could apply what they learned at that time for the rest of their health care journey and that of their families and oftentimes, you know, mothers or pregnant people are the ones who control the health care dynamics for their whole family.

Yeah. And so making sure that I create this space that lets people know that they are the voice that matters in this room and not mine. Uh, that it's. That's the most important message that I, you know, can convey to anyone. Yeah. And it doesn't go out of style. You know, it's always a good time to remember, you know, that it is your body.

It is your life. It is your family. And, and that, you know, the outcome for you is what everybody should be working towards. That's right. Yeah, absolutely. So Dr. Rumley, for being with us today. But before you go, is there a final thought you would like to leave our audience with? Everyone deserves a midwife.

Everyone deserves the kind of care that a midwife provides. You can find a midwife in your community. If you can't find a midwife in your community, ask for a midwife in your community. This is the kind of care that everyone deserves. Absolutely. I could not agree with you more. Thank you. And of course, in our show notes, we'll have some information about the American College of Nurse Midwives.

That way, if folks are looking to learn more about this very important and super exciting profession, they can start there. Thank you so much. Oh, my pleasure, Dr. Brumley. Thank you for shining a light on midwives. As you say, you know, it's, it's not always super well known. So definitely good information to have.

And that's going to do it for this episode of the mother to baby podcast. Be sure to hit that subscribe button. So that way you never miss a new episode and you can go back and listen or relisten to some of those older episodes as well. You can find us on iTunes, Spotify, audible, or however you like to listen to podcasts.

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