

Poster Session IV  
Poster #2

***A World Apart: The Experience of Prenatal Care for Women Planning a Home Birth***

Judith Lothian, PhD, RN, LCCE, Seton Hall University, Brooklyn, NY

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to describe the experience of prenatal care for women planning a home birth. These findings are part of a larger study of the experience of home birth for women and their midwives.

**Background:** Although the safety of planned home birth for healthy women is well established only 1% of US women choose a planned home birth. The focus of most home birth research is on maternal and infant outcomes. There is little research on the experience itself including the experience of prenatal care.

**Methods:** Ethnographic techniques of informal interview and participant observation were used to obtain rich descriptions of women's experience planning (and then having) a home birth. Twenty women representing diverse backgrounds were interviewed and observed in their homes. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Guidelines to insure trustworthiness and protection of human subjects were followed. The data were analyzed using standard qualitative techniques—developing codes, categories and themes.

**Results:** Both the content and the process of prenatal care were strikingly different than standard care. Prenatal visits were in the women's homes, informal, lengthy, and included open discussions of concerns, information, choices, and day to day life. The prenatal care contributed to the women and midwives getting to know each other well and that worked to increase women's knowledge of and confidence in both the process of birth and their own ability to give birth. Open, honest, relaxed communication helped the midwife identify areas of concern and personalize care. Women described prenatal care as "It's all about me and my world".

**Conclusions and Implications:** The prenatal care that women who plan home birth receive is a world apart from standard prenatal care. Personalized prenatal care balances the power between women and their providers ultimately increasing confidence and decreasing fear. It also assists the midwife in meeting women's physical, emotional and psychological needs.