

Home Births— The Standard of Care?

There has been a marked increase in the number of requests for physicians to attend home deliveries, especially in Northern California.

A significant number of mothers and newborns require immediate and sophisticated in-hospital care at delivery. Since potential complications are not always detectable prior to birth, the home-birth issue raises a question of the well established doctrine of the **standard of care**.

Unless extraordinary circumstances prevail (as in the case of bonafide emergencies), little can be argued for home deliveries, with readily available accredited medical facilities within reasonable proximity.

Should you be approached and asked to attend such a childbirth, we would advise you to counsel the mother of the attendant risks in giving birth outside an accredited medical facility and decline to participate.

Given the potential risks involved and considering possible unfavorable interpretation of the **standard of care**, in the courts, **NORCAL MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY** cannot countenance the practice of physicians attending home deliveries and will not continue the insurance of physicians engaged in such practice. ■