

## Australian Water Birth Editorial:

September 96, during the European Perinatology Congress held in Glasgow, Professor James Walker of St James University Hospital warns mothers against the water-birth "fad", claiming that it seriously endangers the safety of both mother and child.

The "Revue Médicale de la Suisse Romande " published statistics for based on 1765 deliveries, 21% of which were water-births, offering any woman who so wishes, the possibility of giving birth in ways that would seem less conventional than those usually offered but which respect standard safety norms (37% choose non-conventional ways : a water-birth or with the mother in a squatting position).

On analysis of the weight of babies with regard to place of birth, it is interesting to note that the body-weight of 4/5 of water-birth babies is between 3000 to 4000 gr., but very few weigh less than 2500 gr. or more than 4000 gr.

Average dilation time tends to be much shorter for water deliveries, both for primiparous and multiparous mothers.

A further comparison shows clearly that in most water-births the expulsion is rapid. This is also true of deliveries using the small obstetrical seat.

It should moreover be noted that the number of episiotomies needed is significantly less in water-births, both in the case of primiparous and multiparous mothers.

During the period 1990-1993, there were very few cases of post-partum infections in the mothers in our Hospital and none relating to water-births.

The figures for estimated blood loss are identical for the various places of birth. From a neonatological standpoint, no cases of transitory respiratory distress requiring more than two hours' oxygenation could be attributed to water-births. The risk of bronchoaspiration does not increase in water. Apgar and pH rates are the same as those in any other hospital.

All figures show that non-conventional deliveries and more particularly water-births allow optimal security and make the delivery a good deal more comfortable for the mother, without exposing the new-born baby to any danger whatsoever.