

C A S E S T U D Y

## Certified Nurse Midwife Uses ALSO® Training at Vacuum-Assisted Birth

Rapid response prevents prolonged fetal bradycardia



When she signed up for ALSO® as a requirement for assisted delivery privileges, Helen Welch, MSN, CNM didn't think she needed the training it had to offer. Now, she says, without it she wouldn't have felt fully prepared when duty called for the vacuum-assisted birth of a baby with fetal bradycardia.

"I trained for OB emergencies in school and had been a practicing midwife for 20 years before I took ALSO, so I thought I knew everything going into it," Welch explains. "But ALSO was full of a-ha moments for me, and I realized I was gaining an important skill set I didn't even know I was lacking – a simple, reliable system for remembering every safety step in critical labor and delivery situations."

That retention system is the cornerstone of the ALSO curriculum, which promotes safety by teaching standardized approaches to OB emergencies using tools and techniques that drive recollection. When asked about the role of ALSO training in her first vacuum-assisted delivery, Welch says it "imprinted an algorithm" on her brain – a standardized safety checklist that systematically led her through the procedure. The outcome: a healthy baby boy born after 12 minutes of fetal bradycardia instead of the 25 minutes it would have been if Welch weren't properly prepared to manage the OB emergency (see reverse for her full story).

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**"Hands-on training and learning tools that lock the information in the memory – that's the ALSO difference."**

– Helen Welch, MSN, CNM

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Because the two-day course prepared Welch in ways her formal schooling had not, she was inspired to become an ALSO instructor as well. Her students include physicians, nurses and midwives – many of whom, like Welch, have experience delivering hundreds of babies but rarely face the challenge of managing an OB emergency. For all maternity care providers, including midwives who attend nearly 12 percent of all vaginal births in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>, Welch says ALSO is "an extremely effective way to gain critical knowledge that can be recalled in its entirety whenever the need arises."

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2012

## Vacuum-Assisted Delivery with ALSO Training: Helen's Story



Helen Welch, MSN, CNM (pictured above) recounts how ALSO training prepared her for vacuum-assisted delivery.

An urgent page rang out overhead, and I hurried to the delivery room – a primigravid woman was pushing with the fetal heart rate (FHR) in the 70s. The FHR had been low for six minutes before I arrived, and the nurses had already taken the usual resuscitative steps to no avail. The woman's obstetrician was en route to the hospital, and no other physicians were present at the time to attend.

The baby's head was at +3 station – too high for an episiotomy to facilitate the birth, but low enough for a safe vacuum delivery. I asked the nurses to prepare a vacuum for the doctor's arrival. Three more minutes passed but the doctor still wasn't there, and while my own heart raced with adrenalin, the FHR remained only 70-80. I knew I needed to take immediate action.

"You know how to do this," I reminded myself, "you learned it in ALSO for precisely this occasion." With that, the ALSO checklist for vacuum application started running through my head like an algorithm imprinted on my brain. As I went through the "ABCDEFGHJIJ" mnemonic I learned in ALSO, the familiarity and ease of recollection turned my nerves into cool, calm control. I applied the vacuum and gave one pull while the mother gave a strong push, and the baby boy crowned. His head delivered with the next push, and then his body. He was lusty and vigorous, and his mother was thrilled.

The OB physician arrived just after delivery of the placenta. If we had waited, the FHR would have been bradycardic for more than 25 minutes instead of just 12 minutes. It was my ALSO training that allowed me to have assisted delivery privileges at the hospital in an emergency with back up en route – but even more importantly, it was my ALSO training that empowered me to act quickly and purposefully while protecting patient safety throughout this emergency.

- Helen Welch, MSN, CNM

### About Advanced Life Support in Obstetrics (ALSO®)

ALSO is an evidence-based, multidisciplinary training program that prepares maternity care providers to better manage obstetric emergencies. The two-day course bridges knowledge gaps and boosts skill sets using a team-based approach, hands-on training, and mnemonics to reduce errors and save lives. Since 1993, ALSO has trained more than 70,000 providers in the U.S. and more than 160,000 clinicians worldwide.