

## **ALSO® Iceland**

by Dr. Berglind Steffensen

Iceland is an island country located in the North Atlantic Ocean, between Norway and Greenland and north of England. It has a population of about 330,000 and is about the size of Minnesota. Its capital and largest city is Reykjavík, home to approximately 50 percent of the national population.

There is one University hospital in Reykjavik where 70 percent of all deliveries take place, but total deliveries are approx. 4500 for the whole country. Cesarean section rate is around 18 percent at Landspítali University Hospital.

Perinatal mortality is registered by ICD10 classification (22 weeks and 500 g) and by the older (28 weeks and 1000g) reference mark. PNM rate is 4.8/1000 by the former and 2.6/1000 by the latter definition, one of the lowest in the world.

Antenatal care is mostly at primary health clinics but high risk pregnancies are referred to Landspítali University Hospital.

All normal deliveries are handled by midwives but all complicated deliveries or emergency situation are the responsibility of OB/GYN physicians.

I first heard of ALSO while doing my OB/GYN residency in Trondheim, Norway. There I attended my first provider course in spring 2005. I found the course very intensive and educational with the best hands-on training I had ever experienced.

When I moved back to Iceland and started to work at Landspítali University Hospital I introduced the ALSO concept to my colleagues and used some of the methods and mnemonics in my teaching for midwives and the OB/GYN residents. However, my dream was to be able to offer the ALSO provider course to all Icelandic midwives, OB/GYN physicians, residents and other physicians who are responsible for deliveries. This idea was very well received by the chief of the women's clinic at Landspítali who contacted ALSO Scandinavia in Denmark who were very supportive from the beginning.

To make a long story short –we received the permission of ALSO Scandinavia to hold the first provider course in Iceland in May 2009. Eight Icelandic instructors-to-be were chosen and went to Denmark and England for a provider course. Our first provider course was supervised by four ALSO certified specialists from Denmark who also were responsible for our instructor course.

Our Danish colleagues had never experienced to run a provider course where all the eight instructors had never had that role before. Every instructor did their best to impress the participants who also did very well at the course. Participants were from the university hospital and also from small delivery units in rural Iceland. The course demanded a tremendous amount of work but all agreed that it was well worth it!

We believe that it should be a priority for every university hospital or health care system to offer the ALSO provider course to all healthcare providers responsible for deliveries as a part of a quality assurance program. Hopefully, by doing so, it will improve quality of care and reduce mistakes or serious events.