

The Beauty of Childbirth: Learning from the Work of Japanese Midwives

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Japan vs US

	Infant Mortality Rate	Maternal Mortality Rate
Japan	2.00 (per 1000)	5.00 (per 100,000)
US	5.80 (per 1000)	14 (per 100,000)

UpaUpa Birthing Center

- ~ 300 birthing centers in Japan
- UpaUpa Birthing Center = 2-storey apartment
- 8 midwives total (at least 2 midwives/shift)
- All medical records in pen and paper
- Traditional methods promotes at-home, comfortable environment



Methods

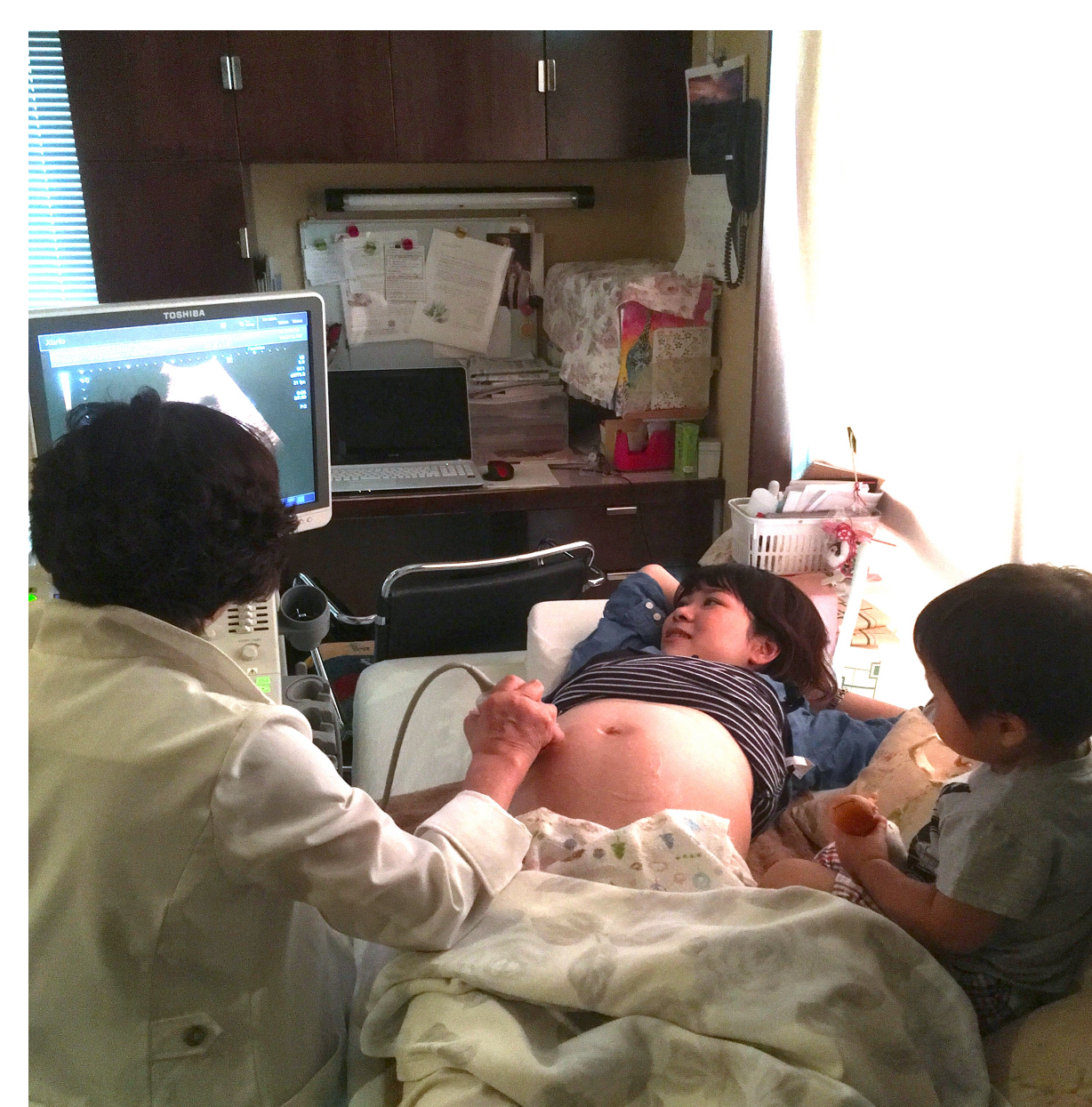
- Mini-ethnography research method
- Informed consent obtained from UpaUpa birthing center, each midwife, and patient prior to interviews
- IRB permission
- Data Analysis = Thematic Analysis
 - All interviews conducted in Japanese

Theme 1: Valuing Mother's Autonomy

- All births are natural births = hard work + painful!
- Hard work + pain - a sign of entering motherhood
- Midwives believe in strength that the mothers bring to the delivery room
- Delivery of child is mother's job rather than the midwives' job
- Important to deliver baby using own strength and physical touch

Theme 2: Relationship-Centered Care

- Midwife, mother and other family members = one team
- Mother and baby congratulated after delivery → Gives sense of pride
- Midwife stays with mother throughout entire birthing process
- Strong sense of trust, empathy, support
- Comfortable environment → Less risk of complications, less anxiety



Theme 3: Family Involvement

- Highly recommended by birthing center midwives
- Support form filled with family members
- Ensures mothers never feel alone and unsupported
- Presence of siblings at patient exams decreases anxiety
- No limit to number of family members in delivery room/during stay at birthing center

Discussion

- Natural births = best choice for women in Japan
- Unlike US, midwives follow mother/infant through 1st year of life
- Labor pain is normal – mothers still have concern about epidural use
- No limit in number of guests during delivery, unlike US
- More family involvement = more love and support
- Midwives + preservation of natural birthing methods → low infant mortality rate in Japan



Research Implications

- Strong adherence to natural birth due to epidural and community perception concerns
- Midwives believe strongly in power of women
- More education about birthing centers for low-risk mothers
- Contrast between birthing culture of the United States and Japan
- US → encourage family involvement and mother's autonomy
- Japan → more support for mother's who do opt for epidural use

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