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DONA International introduces doula support to Taiwan

The growing worldwide use of doula support in birth just got a boost from DONA International's Canadian president. DONA International is the world's oldest and largest doula association.

Susan Martensen of Ottawa is currently conducting doula trainings in Taiwan. President of DONA International, Martensen is wrapping up 16 days in Taiwan, conducting birth doula workshops for nurses and midwives, and Barbara Harper has been conducting waterbirth information seminars for nurses, midwives and physicians in Taipei. Susan also conducted birth doula workshops in Taichung, south of Taipei.

She is returning to Ottawa Friday, March 17, and will be available next week for interviews about her experience. Photos will also be available.

Doulas are professionals who provide emotional, physical, and informational support to women and childbearing families before, during and after birth, and during the "fourth trimester," the critical three months after birth. "DONA International provides educational opportunities for doulas and a meaningful certification process that is the industry's respected measure of quality and professionalism," says Martensen.

Martensen sees the trip to Taiwan as part of DONA International's response to the growing global demand for doula support. Use of doulas in Canada, the United States and Western Europe has been on the rise for more than a dozen years. DONA International has about 5,700 members today, up from 750 in 1994.

Interest in professional doula services has grown worldwide in recent years, and DONA International now has doula members in more than 20 countries around the globe.

DONA International trainers have recently conducted doula workshops in China, Australia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Trinidad, Korea and the Netherlands, to name but a few.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, researchers found that women who had used doulas had shorter labors and fewer Caesarean births. Recent research shows women who had doula support also have increased rates of breastfeeding, more positive mother-infant relationships and greater satisfaction with their birth experience.

Martensen is in Taiwan at the invitation of Dr. Kuang-Ta Huang, a prominent physician in Taipei.

DONA International is the oldest and largest doula association in the world. This international, non-profit organization supports doulas by providing quality training and meaningful certification. DONA International certification indicates to families that a doula has achieved a high level of training and professionalism. DONA International promotes continuing education for doulas and provides a strong communication link among doulas and between doulas, families and the medical birthing community.