DONA International (1992– ) [1]

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In 1992, five maternal-infant health researchers founded Doulas of North America, later renamed DONA International to train certified birth attendants called doulas to provide care to pregnant women both before and after the birthing process. Annie Kennedy, John Kennell, Marshall Klaus, Phyllis Klaus, and Penny Simkin used the term doula, derived from the Greek word for woman, to describe a female birthing aide who provides non-medical emotional and physical support to laboring pregnant women. Eventually DONA International, the organization [2] has certified over 12,000 doulas as of 2017. Though the organization [3] aims to provide a doula to everyone who wants one, there have been controversies surrounding the accessibility, affordability, and necessity of pregnant women using a doula before and after birth. DONA International is the largest doula-certifying program in the world and has developed international presence outside of North America. As of 2017, some hospitals in the United States and Europe have prohibited the presence of doulas. According to the physicians interviewed in that article, they encountered doulas who overstepped their boundaries and providing guidance in breastfeeding and lactation. The DONA International's doula training program is largely based on the research done by the original founders, who found that women experienced more positive births with the aid of a doula. A 2013 article published in the Journal of Perinatal Education summarized over ten studies performed in the 2000s that indicated doulas provided positive support to laboring women. Those researchers found that laboring women assisted by doulas throughout their pregnancies were four times less likely to have an infant with low birth weight, and were significantly more successful at initiating breastfeeding in the first twelve hours following birth. Those conclusions and those found by Klaus and Klaus on the benefit of breastfeeding during the first few postpartum days, DONA International created an optional online breastfeeding course to better prepare doulas to assist women who recently gave birth in initiating breastfeeding. The five original founders had a large influence in DONA International's development as the first doula-certification organization [4], Simkin served as the original president of the organization [5], and contributed to the doula manuals and certification standards that the organization [6] produced. The Klauss conducted research on new mothers and found that the three-to-four-day period following birth was a crucial time for women who recently gave birth to form attachments to their infants. The founders implemented those findings in the organization's standards on the importance of immediate skin-to-skin contact and breastfeeding. Even after many of the original five founders stepped down, they continued to collaborate on research. In 2012, Klaus, Klaus, and Kennedy published the book. The Doula Book: How a Trained Labor Companion Can Help You Have a Shorter, Easier, and Healthier Birth, a guide on emotional and physical support during labor. DONA International recommends that all doulas pursuing certification read the book.

During the 2000s, the organization [7] evaded to encompass state-level affiliations, with a state director for each state in the United States and national directors for countries outside of North America. There is also a board of directors that are voted into office every year by members of the organization [8]. In 2004, the organization [9] evolved to encompass state-level affiliations, with a state director for each state in the United States and national directors for countries outside of North America. As of 2018, DONA International oversees their general management and operations activities, a consulting company named Bostrom headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. Bostrom, through its management office and its board of directors, certifies medical and education managers, and a membership manager, along with full support staff of employees. Throughout the 2000s, DONA International continued to rely on the membership used by the organization [10] to conduct research regarding the role of doulas in the birthing process, and contributed to the World Health Organization’s Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative by demonstrating the benefits of lactation consultants and birthing aids.

Sources


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