

Kentucky's Chief Maternal Menace - the Untrained Midwife.

Kentucky yearly contributes her share of maternal deaths, which added to the maternal deaths of other states, make the appalling total that causes America to stand ashamed before other nations. A large percentage of these deaths result from the activities of the untrained midwife, for Kentucky, like her sister states of the South, suffers from this menace to motherhood.

Much has already been written of the Southern midwife. The excellent report of Miss Marimer on "Midwifery in Alabama" describes the negro midwife, a type similar to the Kentucky negro midwife. Reports on the Virginia, Tennessee, Mississippi and North Carolina midwives show that through the South, especially the Appalachian Region, midwives are much alike, and the white midwife of Kentucky differs but little from her sisters in nearby states. Dr. Anna Rude in her report "The Midwife Problem in the United States", says that Kentucky and North Carolina tie for third place on the list of states having the largest number of registered midwives, Virginia and Mississippi leading as first and second respectively.

With inadequate records it is impossible to correctly estimate the exact number of midwives in the state. When the Bureau of Maternal and Child Health was established in 1922 a survey was made, the result of which gave an approximate estimate of 2,500 practicing midwives. A second survey made during the summer of 1925 showed that the midwives had been reduced to 2,245. This reduction is due to class instruction and the forbidding of the oldest and dirtiest midwives to practice. An effort was made to learn the number of white and negro midwives. A letter was sent to all registrars, asking them to give the names of the white and negro midwives. The following was the result of the inquiry:

1,402	-	white midwives
214	-	negro midwives
629	-	no. answer - names on files, but color unknown.
<u>2,245</u>		