

midirs Writes



Editorial comment on issues addressed in this month's Essentially MIDIRS...

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Comment by

Sara Wickham Editor

*Thank you,
Essentially MIDIRS*

I don't know whether it is a cosmic coincidence or one of those statistical events that seem significant to the human brain but aren't actually as mathematically unlikely as they appear, but this issue of *Essentially MIDIRS*, and my last as her Editor, will make its way to the printers on the fourth anniversary of the day that I was invited to create MIDIRS new monthly journal. It has been a roller coaster ride, with the kinds of peaks and dips that you might expect from a role that requires one to read around a hundred pages of research abstracts and four or five original articles a week while producing editorials, puzzles, questions, features and all manner of other content on the side but, as I have said elsewhere, I have enjoyed every minute of the journey. I have spent all week considering what I should write in my

last editorial, and then it struck me that the articles in this issue epitomise and illustrate three things that I think are key to midwifery thinking and knowledge. So I hope you will indulge me in letting off some metaphorical fireworks in the form of a final few words about the things that I have tried to celebrate within the pages of the first 37 issues of *Essentially MIDIRS*.

We need to remember that evidence comes in many forms

I have long claimed that evidence comes in many different forms and I stand by that statement today. It is (in my humble opinion) utterly ridiculous to claim that systematic reviews, randomised controlled trials or any other specific research method are

intrinsically any better than any other kind of approach, because different questions or problems require different means and methods of seeking solutions. If we want to evaluate the effectiveness of a drug, there is no better means than a good trial, but such questions comprise only a tiny proportion of the knowledge needed by midwives. If we want to explore the value of creativity in women's experiences and/or midwifery practice, then we need articles that explore this in ways that draw upon multiple dimensions of knowing. This issue includes a bumper double feature of the creativity collection as well as articles and updates of research knowledge and other kinds of thinking, and I want to propose that they are all of potential value in their own way and that we should hold spaces for each of them.



We need to look at the evidence through the eyes of a midwife

I am not denying for a moment that there is value in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration in health care practice, teaching and research, but I feel concerned that such moves can sometimes bring the danger that the tenets of the individual craft or profession — be it midwifery or any other — may be diluted or lost in the ensuing soup. Pioneering midwives like Mavis Kirkham, Mary Renfrew and their contemporaries identified a midwifery viewpoint that offered a valuable perspective which was not necessarily obvious to others looking at the same evidence or practice situation from another standpoint. I am not arguing that this midwifery standpoint is more valuable than any other, particularly not that of childbearing women. But I am suggesting that we should honour and guard the midwifery perspective as something special; something worth protecting and preserving and, yes, worth letting off those metaphorical fireworks to celebrate. It can help to seed articles such as that by Silke Powell, who has looked at evidence which has been available to others, yet applied original and particular ways of thinking about it that puts it into a new light. In research terms, we have only really begun to unravel what this midwifery standpoint entails and means, and it is all the more precious because of this.

We need to be able to think outside the box

Jude Davis's article in this issue is one of those that comes along only once in a while, and it beautifully illustrates the way in which we need to continually think about and challenge what we do and to turn things around — in this case almost literally — in order to see other possibilities. Some people will read Jude's article and experience an 'a ha' moment. Some might have already discovered or realised the same thing. Yet, to my knowledge, no one has written about it before, and, like it or not, writing continues to be one of the best ways of generating, debating and sharing knowledge amongst ourselves. So let me begin my ending by thanking you, *Essentially MIDIRS* readers and subscribers, who care for and about women, babies and families enough to have sought a journal that was created to share the writing and knowledge that supports that work.

I would also like to thank my former *Digest* editor colleagues, Sally Marchant,



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Nadine Edwards and Becky Reed, with a special hug for Nadine who has long supported me behind the scenes and more formally as Associate Editor and acted as midwife to many of the articles that you have read in these pages. Thanks also to the former members of the Advisory Panel who had such great ideas, did a fabulous job of supporting and promoting the journal and contributed so many articles: Julie Frohlich, Penny Champion, Nadine Edwards, Mavis Kirkham, Jilly Ireland, Ruth Deery, Ina May Gaskin, Emma Mills and Kate Barnett. It is always problematic to start listing people who have written and helped in myriad other ways because I really have appreciated every contribution and it becomes impossible to draw a line, so a big collective thank you to everyone who

has contributed articles, reviews, ask away questions / answers, ideas, features or news and to all my past and present colleagues at MIDIRS. Above all, my final words of gratitude to those who made it all happen on a daily basis; the former and current members of 'the EM team': Steve Clayton, Tasha Cooper, Jennie Roe and Charlotte Ince. Thank you all; you have the bridge.

