



## Editorial

Undergraduate midwifery education in New Zealand is in the process of change. While current programmes have ensured that midwives are competent to practise, pending changes have resulted from feedback from the profession that new midwives need to feel more confident in their first year of practice as registered midwives. Increases to both the theoretical and clinical practice hours remain within a 3-year time period rather than maintaining the usual university and polytechnic academic year and extending the new programme into a fourth year.

It is likely that new programmes will have an increased amount of content delivery by distance education. It is unknown how this will affect the percentage of midwives graduating but Massey University, a university with decades of experience in distance education, has found student non-completion of courses is greatly increased with this form of programme delivery.<sup>1</sup>

Concerns have been expressed that the increased number of weeks within each of the three years will impact negatively on students' abilities to earn incomes and that this will, therefore, result in a drop off in student enrolments. Of equal concern to some is the impact of increased practical and theory hours and, potentially, an increased workload if further assessments are added to what are already very full programme requirements.

The New Zealand literature on how midwifery course requirements impact on students' experiences as women, mothers and partners has been lacking until now. A study

conducted by Deena Robinson, Rana Kamo and Jacqui Wylie when they were 3rd year student midwives in 2006, is reported on in this Issue. As the authors note of their three year programme - "the combined pressure of a midwifery workload, meeting academic requirements and managing family commitments was extremely challenging ...". This research is a beginning to filling the gap in New Zealand literature on knowing and understanding the lived experience of students undergoing midwifery programmes of the current length.

The theme of education, this time antenatal education, continues in this Issue with two different aspects being explored - one from the viewpoint of a woman (Anna Fielder) in late pregnancy, the other from Lorna Davies whose tips for facilitating childbirth and parenting education will be a valuable resource for those providing these preparatory sessions.

The demand for evidence-informed practice has resulted in increasing amounts of research being undertaken. But are findings representative of the 'researched'? And how can research questions create 'inevitable' findings? These two questions, and her observations as a participant in the current 'Growing Up in New Zealand' study, are discussed by Kim Duggan.

As this 4<sup>th</sup> Issue goes to print, it is with considerable satisfaction that we end the first year of the journal's publication knowing that its combination of the arts and sciences of midwifery has been influential, nationally and internationally, in supporting both midwifery practice and women's aspirations for healthy

pregnancy, birthing and mothering. Next year promises to continue building on this - so read on ... and roll on next year.

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### Reference

1. Ryan K. How long should a midwifery degree take? Interview with Sharon Cole, Deputy Chair, Midwifery Council of New Zealand and Warwick Slinn, Acting Head of the School Health and Social Services, Massey University, 2 November 2009. Available at [www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetonoon](http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetonoon).