



The University of Bradford Institutional Repository

<http://bradscholars.brad.ac.uk>

This work is made available online in accordance with publisher policies. Please refer to the repository record for this item and our Policy Document available from the repository home page for further information.

To see the final version of this work please visit the publisher's website. Access to the published online version may require a subscription.

Link to publisher version: <https://www.midwives.org.au/magazines/australian-midwifery-news>

Citation: Firth A (2017) Working collaboratively on publications and conference presentations – Valuing student midwives' contribution to the future of midwifery. Australian Midwifery News. 17(4): 29.

Copyright statement: © 2017 Australian College of Midwives. Full-text reproduced with publisher permission.

Working collaboratively on publications and conference presentations – Valuing student midwives’ contribution to the future of midwifery.

I have been a lecturer in midwifery for 4 years and I recently supported a senior undergraduate student in recognising the quality of her final stage dissertation. Reading Alex’s work reminded me of how students on the cusp of qualifying and registration are the future of the profession. Her work was relevant to midwifery right now at this moment and makes valuable contribution to what is already published. As a novice researcher Alex was much less confident, but with a little support and guidance she has both published her work in a national midwifery journal and also presented at a national conference in the UK.

Frequently clinicians (including experienced midwives, academics and student midwives) underestimate what they as individual clinicians or small teams can offer to the wider clinical field (Happell, 2012). The hierarchy is so easy to slip into: student/ academic tutor or student/ mentor relationships; for much of the time feeling comfortable to all parties. In many ways, rather like learning to drive, building confidence as a midwife begins after qualification and registration, yet also the day to day job quickly takes over and the extra reading and research time enjoyed as a student disappears or competes for priority with other parts of the role.

Students are perfect partners for collaboration. Although they are relatively inexperienced midwives, almost all have had successful careers and life experiences and bring those transferable skills to the profession. Strong students immerse themselves in contemporary midwifery literature, both for their academic assignments and because they are hungry for knowledge. In contrast, qualified midwives have grounded clinical experiences, seeing and understanding the challenges of applying research informed practice. Students have the advantage of being new to the field, able to challenge practice because they are not immersed in the rhetoric of ‘we’ve always done it this way’. They can be a fresh pair of eyes and injection of motivation into the clinical environment. Educationally and clinically we are seeing a shift away from students as merely participants in training, they are becoming co-producers of their own career (McCulloch, 2009). Midwives at all levels are once again fighting vociferously to protect their profession and to promote the physiology of pregnancy and birth for women. A great way to capture the strengths of both parties is to work together to present and publish the great midwifery work that is taking place in your environment. The process is less daunting when it is broken down to its component parts.

What:

Identify an interesting project that you and the student have been involved in. It might be a dissertation or report, a midwifery innovation that has been piloted in your clinical area or a new structure that has been implemented.

What was your motivation for being involved in this project? What are the outcomes and were they what you expected? This is valuable information for other clinicians who may want to undertake similar projects.

Where:

Consider submitting a conference poster, paper, presentation, professional blog post or delivering a workshop. Start small and play to your strengths or take a risk and aim for something bigger like a conference or journal publication.

Presenting to colleagues, others within your trust such as governance groups or share the project findings with other local maternity units is a great way to build self-confidence for both the student and clinician. Alternatively (or additionally) aim for a national platform – there many conferences small and large, local or further afield. Approach a journal editor and ask if they would be interested in publishing an article on your topic. Clarify with editors what kind of article they would expect. It might be a commentary, discussion paper, literature review or a project evaluation. Ask other midwives where they have presented similar projects, look out for advertisements in midwifery journals or on social media, particularly Twitter.

How?

Lack of time, lack of confidence and unfamiliarity with processes are frequently cited as reasons for not pursuing publication (Williams, 2015). Williams suggests small writing groups supported by an experienced peer. Find someone who has undertaken a presentation/ publication previously, asking them to read your work and provide constructive criticism.

Identify what each of your roles are; if the student has undertaken the majority of the work, ensure that they are lead author on any submission and rightfully take credit for their intellectual property. If it is an equal team effort, negotiate who will be lead author at the beginning to avoid any future misunderstandings.

Why:

It's imperative for midwives to share good practice and new knowledge; the greatest of midwifery movements have started with someone stepping out of their comfort zone. The process of publishing and presenting provides great networking opportunities, looks great on appraisal documents or CVs and could be the stepping stone to future projects and job opportunities for everyone involved. If you already have these experiences then use it to give someone more junior a step up, after all the future of the profession is in their hands.

Are you convinced yet? Let me finish with a quote from Alex:

“Working with my tutor allowed me to grow my confidence in order to flourish academically and reach my dream of being published in a midwifery journal and present my findings at a conference. She helped me on my journey to start making a difference in practice. We both learned from each other, it's a wonderful opportunity to be grabbed by both hands”.

References:

- Happell, B. (2012). Writing and publishing clinical articles: a practical guide. *Emergency Nurse*, 20(1), 33-38.
- McCulloch, A. (2009). The student as co-producer: learning from public administration about the student–university relationship. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(2), 171-183.
- Williams, B. (2015). Support for nurses in writing for publication. *Nursing Times*, 111(9), 15-18.