



Royal College
of Midwives



Learn, Share & Improve Care
Inspiring midwives, improving maternity care

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Writing for publication

This audio podcast is to help midwives write for publication.

Why write for publication?

Writing for publication matters because:

- midwives, nurses and other health care professionals must base their care on evidence, this is especially important where midwives want to be recognised as professionals, for example, in Bangladesh
- midwives must also help create that evidence base, by sharing their knowledge, skills and experience
- sharing knowledge improves quality of care and also helps other professionals to learn and develop skills and confidence.

Being able to write and get your work published takes time and patience. However, it brings a sense of achievement, recognition and, most of all, the opportunity to make a difference to people's lives.

What can midwives publish?

Publishing is not just for academics and teachers, and is not just for research. Other sorts of work can be published, for example, audit or quality improvement projects and many midwives are doing this work every day to solve problems and improve the quality of care where they work.. Midwives working in hospitals and the community worldwide also have valuable experience and knowledge that can be shared through publication.

Midwives create evidence through their work every day because midwives are problem solvers.

Midwives create evidence when they:

- identify a problem
- develop a new system or a new way of working
- do an audit or quality improvement project.

By evaluating the work they have done, and sharing their findings, midwives can help to shape care guidelines, encourage debate and develop new knowledge locally, nationally and worldwide.

How do I start?

Decide on a topic that is important to you.

Don't worry if the topic you want to write about has been written about before. You may have different experiences, in a different context, and your work may show different results.

Your work could also be about new, or different, practices that readers need to know about. There is always a need for up-to-date evidence-based information that can inform practice.

College assignments, or reports you have written for work, can be good starting points – although the format and emphasis will need to change to suit the journal you want to publish in.

Read lots of articles yourself to understand how they are structured. It is also helpful to look at past issues of journals, to get an idea of the journal's overall style and focus.

If you have an idea for an article you can send the journal editor an abstract to ask whether it is suitable for their publication.

How to write for publication

Think about your reader

First, always think about the person who will be reading your work. Never assume they will know what you are writing about. You may work in a very different context and it is important to be aware of this.

Ask yourself:

- Is my article relevant to midwives, student midwives, Maternity Support Workers (MSWs) or any health professional caring for women during pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period?
- Is my language and level of argument appropriate for the readers?
- Have I been clear about the context I am working in?

Think about structure and focus

A journal article should be written in a different style from, for example, an academic essay or a work report. Aim for a readable style that is easy to understand.

Good papers are short and clear. Do not include too much information as readers may not read it carefully, may stop reading it halfway through or may not even start it!

If your article is too long it is easy for you, the author, to lose focus and harder for readers to take away the important points you want to make.

Writing an article for publication takes time and authors often write several drafts before the final version is ready.

Ask yourself:

- Does my article say something new?
- What question(s) am I trying to answer?
- Does the article flow in a logical progression?
- Could I improve it by rewriting or moving certain paragraphs?
- Have I helped the reader through the article with regular (short) subheadings?
- Have I answered the question(s) accurately?

Think about visuals

Sometimes the easiest way to make an article clear and short is to include illustrations, tables or charts and graphs.

Think about whether any of these would help you make your point. If so, include them separately and make a note of where they need to go in your article.

Ask yourself:

- Would these words be made clearer by a diagram or illustration?
- Can I replace these words with a table?

Think about referencing

It is important to support any statements, or statistics, you include from another source with a clear, accurate reference. All in-text references should link to a complete reference at the end of your article.

References not only show that your writing is evidence-based but also give readers the chance to look at more information about the topic.

If you have access to a librarian where you work or study they can help with literature searches and other practical referencing resources.

Journals also usually have their own referencing guidelines so make sure you know what they are.

Ask yourself:

- Have I made clear what is personal opinion and what is evidence/research-based fact?
- Are all my references complete and correct?
- Do my references follow the journal's guidelines?

Journal guidelines

MIDIRS Digest, and most other publications, have author guidelines to help you structure your article and communicate effectively with readers.

Before you start writing read them carefully and refer to them while you write.

MIDIRS Digest Guidelines are available to authors on the MIDIRS website.

<https://www.midirs.org/informing/midirs-midwifery-digest/write-for-midirs-midwifery-digest/>

Check everything!

When you have a final version of your article, read it through aloud or use the 'read aloud' facility in your word-processing programme. This helps you find any poor sentences or paragraphs and see if the article 'flows'.

It's a good idea to ask two people to read your article and give you feedback. The first person should be an expert: they can confirm that your article is accurate. The second person should know nothing about the subject: they can tell you how clear your writing is. If English is not your first language you may wish a native English speaker to review your article.

Remember that all feedback is good – often negative feedback is the most useful!

Re-read your writing carefully before you submit. Check spelling, references, and that you have followed the author guidelines. Remove any unnecessary words or phrases.

Where to publish your article

Before you started writing your article you may have read articles in a range of journals and, perhaps, sent an abstract to an editor.

Where you publish will depend on partly on your own choice, and partly on the decision of the journal editor.

Ask yourself:

- Is this work only of importance to midwives or also to others? Should I publish in a midwifery journal or a journal with a wider reach?
- Is this important for readers in my own country, in my region or internationally?
- Should I include others as authors, for example my colleagues, someone from a partner organisation or a maternity service user?

- Do I want everyone to be able to read this publication free of charge (Open Access)? Can I afford to pay for any publication fees?
- How good is the reputation of my chosen journal or publication?

If a peer-reviewed journal provisionally accepts your article, publication can take a long time as your article will need to be sent to reviewers for comments before final acceptance.

Other journals will be able to give you a quicker response and publication time.

Publishing in MIDIRS Midwifery Digest

MIDIRS Midwifery Digest is part of the Royal College of Midwives. It is a quarterly international journal of original evidence-based articles, clinical reflections, practice improvements and opinions that discuss topics in detail.

The Digest publishes articles by any health professional caring for women, babies and their families during pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period, worldwide.

Our focus is on giving midwives information they can apply to their own work. For example, the results of an audit or quality improvement project that has changed how you do things.

After you submit your article to the Digest editor you will get feedback within two weeks. If your article is accepted it will then go to the editorial team, who may contact you with further queries. You can always check with the editor or editorial team about the progress being made with your submission.

Time to get writing!

Finding your way around the publication process might seem like hard work at first – but seeing your work in print will be worth it.

You and your motivation are the key factors in getting your work published. Grasp the opportunity with both hands – you might enjoy it!



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