



New Zealand
College of Midwives

TE KĀRETI O NGA KAIWHAKAWHANAU KI AOTEAROA

New Zealand College of Midwives Research Strategy

2017- 2023

Introduction

This research strategy sets out the strategic purpose, principles and objectives which will support and guide research supported and/or undertaken by the New Zealand College of Midwives (the College)¹. The College represents midwives and maternity interests to a variety of stakeholders such as the government, health organisations, other health professions, consumer groups, media and the general public. It is important that there is evidence to inform practice and provide information on the benefits and issues when providing midwifery care for women and their families.

Purpose

The purpose of this research strategy is to provide a cohesive framework from which the National Office of the College can support increasing amounts and quality of New Zealand midwifery research. This will be done by building capacity and accessing expertise from throughout the community of midwives. A cohesive framework can be used to identify the priority areas for research.

The College believes that New Zealand midwifery practice will be strengthened through research projects undertaken by New Zealand midwives. Research when undertaken by midwives ensures a greater depth of understanding to support the evaluation of current midwifery practices. It therefore benefits not just midwives but also women and whānau engaged in midwifery care. Research activities can provide evidence to inform midwifery practice, which can also be incorporated to ensure continuous quality improvement activities within the maternity service.

Midwives are frequently being targeted by researchers to be involved in research projects related to maternity. Any involvement or response requires a time commitment, which can result in midwives becoming reluctant to be involved in future research. Researchers may also be seeking to undertake research on the practice of midwives when they may not fully understand the context in New Zealand. Members rely on the

¹ The College represents the community of midwives in New Zealand. The College's National Office proactively responds to national needs and undertakes its own research but always in reference to the wider community of midwives.

College to ensure that they are only invited to be involved in research which meets the College's research strategy's guiding principles, strategic objectives and priorities.

Guiding principles

The College supports research projects that:

1. Strengthen knowledge and understanding of midwifery as an autonomous profession.
2. Reflect the principles of partnership, protection and participation as identified in the Treaty of Waitangi.
3. Reflect the needs of society and of women, particularly in relation to maternity services.
4. Reflect the centrality of women inherent in the midwifery philosophy which has its foundation in practice and how midwives work with women.
5. Reflect and meet the needs of the midwifery profession and the women and newborn for whom they provide midwifery care.
6. Are accessible to all midwives and women through publication and dissemination via conferences, journals and workshops.

(Pairman, NZCOM Education Framework. 1999)

In addition to the foundational principles of partnership, protection and participation, recognition will be given to indigenous and non-Western methodologies, thereby supporting the special interests of some New Zealand midwives and creating a point of difference internationally.

Strategic objectives

The objectives of the research strategy are to:

1. Identify the research needs (gaps in the evidence) for midwifery and maternity care in New Zealand and set research priorities which reflect the strategic goals of the College.
2. Support and undertake projects which support the research priorities identified by the community of midwives and women who have experienced maternity services in New Zealand.

3. Increase collaboration between and with research groups (national and international) and support the development of New Zealand midwifery research expertise by facilitating research reflective of the research priorities.
4. Work with the midwifery postgraduate education sector to support midwifery research expertise.
5. Support the community of midwives by publishing, disseminating and utilising research outcomes.

In this way we can inform practice, policy and service development based on national research findings.

Objective One: Identify research priorities

When considering research priorities the strategic plan and the education strategy were reviewed to ensure consistency of approach within the research strategy. Areas that should be considered a priority for research are identified in Table 1.

Table 1: Research priorities

Priority	
Research supporting normal birth and normal childbirth physiology	A strategic priority for the College is the promotion of the health and wellbeing of New Zealand mothers and babies through the promotion of birth as a normal life event. Research activities that support an understanding of pregnancy and birth physiology, normal birth and ways to increase the normal birth rate are therefore an important priority activity.
Investigation/research that supports and promotes midwifery practice and professionalism	A key goal for the College is one of strengthening and supporting the continued development of the midwifery profession. This therefore is a key area for research and one in which research activities will be undertaken which are designed to explore innovative practice and ensure that the autonomous role of the midwife is protected, supported and promoted both nationally and internationally.
Investigation/research related to identifying and supporting optimal health	Midwifery is concerned with promoting the woman's and baby's health during the maternity episode. New Zealand midwives work in a partnership model which supports continuity of care

<p>for women, their babies and their families during the maternity episode</p>	<p>and the building of a supportive relationship with the woman and her family. This relationship can enhance the health and wellbeing of the woman and her partner by supporting healthy lifestyle choices. Research that investigates issues related to optimal health and optimal outcomes will support women to understand and recognise the importance of lifestyle and its impact on health during childbirth.</p>
<p>Investigation/research that can support and inform practice, policy/guideline development and maternity service provision</p>	<p>The College represents midwives and midwifery health interests to a variety of stakeholders such as the government, health organisations, other health professions, consumer groups, media and the general public. Evidence to inform practice and provide information on the current model of midwifery care and the benefits or otherwise of midwifery care for women and their families is essential.</p>

Objective Two: Undertake projects that support the research priorities

The National Office on advice from the National Board has been and continues to be involved in several research projects that fit within the strategic priorities (appendices 1 & 2).

Objective Three: Collaborate with other research groups

The College works with other researchers who have knowledge and expertise in particular topics/methodology. All National Office-led research will identify a research advisory group from the community of midwives who can provide expert knowledge, support and guidance for the research project. In addition the College will seek to:

- Further support and develop the Joan Donley Research Collaboration as an entity that can facilitate research collaborations between researchers, the postgraduate schools and the profession.
- Promote collaboration between midwives and those engaged in trans-disciplinary research in women’s and children’s health nationally.
- Promote and facilitate collaborative international midwifery research between New Zealand researchers and international researchers.

- Promote, participate in and facilitate collaborative multi-disciplinary research projects between midwives and consumers, healthcare service providers and educational institutions.
- Develop relationships with Māori research groups undertaking research on midwifery workforce, midwifery services and maternity outcomes for Māori women.

Objective Four: Work with the midwifery postgraduate education sector to develop midwifery research expertise

The College will seek to work with the midwifery postgraduate education sector to support the development of midwifery research expertise within New Zealand. It will facilitate access to the College's Databases for research purposes (the Clinical Outcomes Research Database and the Membership Database). A transparent process for members who are involved in research and meet the criteria to access these databases has been developed. Flow charts explaining this process can be found at: <https://www.midwife.org.nz/midwives/research/>.

Researchers often request participation from midwives to either provide information or support recruitment to research projects. These researchers may be midwives but more commonly are not. It is timely to set out some key expectations of research projects if researchers want midwifery input. Appendix 3 sets out some key expectations for midwifery chairs/regions and researchers to consider when they seek midwifery involvement in a research project (local or national).

Objective Five: Publish, disseminate and utilise research findings which inform practice, policy and service development

Once research is completed there is a need for consideration about how the findings are disseminated and identification of the key audiences for that particular research subject. There is a need to increase publication of all research projects undertaken in New Zealand. Priority will be given to national research projects submitted to the NZCOM Journal for dissemination to midwives.

Each research project undertaken or co-ordinated by National Office will be carefully considered to identify which elements should be disseminated to midwives via the NZCOM Journal and which could be disseminated to a wider international professional audience.

The College holds biennial conferences which provide an opportunity for researchers to discuss and disseminate their completed research findings with the midwifery profession. The biennial Joan Donley Research Collaboration Forum also facilitates the dissemination of research findings between researchers, the postgraduate schools and the profession.

Implementation and monitoring of the proposed research strategy

Implementation of the strategy has been ongoing since 2017 (see Table 2). The research strategy, framework and priorities will be reviewed and revised every six years or sooner if priorities change.

Table 2: Objectives and Action Plan

Objective	Initiative	Action
Identify research needs and set as priorities	Supporting Normal Birth Supporting the Midwifery Profession Supporting women's, babies' and family/whānau health Informing practice, policy and service development	Priorities agreed with members, education institutes and stakeholders Review every six years or sooner if needed
Undertake research that reflects these priority areas	Identify and develop topics for research in relation to midwifery practice within the four priority areas.	See appendices 1 & 2
Collaborate with research groups	Promote collaboration and facilitate liaison between midwifery researchers nationally and internationally Facilitate collaborative researcher with multi-disciplinary groups/researchers	Identify where collaborations can occur nationally, internationally, within midwifery and also within multidisciplinary groups – see appendices 1 & 2
Support the development of midwifery research expertise	Work with the sector to facilitate inclusion of midwives with expertise in research projects Facilitate access to the NZCOM research and membership databases.	Clear and transparent processes for access to NZCOM research and membership databases have been developed – report to National committee annually
Publish, disseminate and utilise New Zealand midwifery research to inform practice, policy and service development	Utilise NZCOM publications NZCOM Journal / Midwifery News to promote NZ midwifery research Continue to publish MMPO reports, and use MMPO data to inform policy and service development Increase analysis of MMPO data and use to inform practice Support New Zealand midwives to publish	Promote access to NZCOMCORD (College of Midwives Clinical Outcomes Research Database) Clinical outcomes reports published to 2012 with 2013 & 2014 in process Develop resources to support midwives to publish research papers (Journal website – support and explanation of writing for publication, clarity of submission processes)

Appendix 1

Current research projects

Research priorities	Collaborations	Methodology	Commenced	Completed	Published
1. Supporting normal birth and normal childbirth physiology					
Midwives Expertise in Preserving the Perineum (MEPPI)	Cecily Begley, Karen Guilliland & Lesley Dixon	Qualitative	2013	2016	Papers in progress
2. Supporting the Midwifery profession & professionalism					
The emotional wellbeing of midwives in New Zealand	Dixon, Guilliland, McAra-Couper, Fenwick, Pallant	Quantitative Survey	2013	Data collection completed	Papers in progress
3. Supporting women's and babies' health					
Feasibility of national pulse oximetry screening for congenital heart disease	Professor Frank Bloomfield, Elza Cloete, Tom Gentles, Jane Alsweiler, Lesley Dixon, Dianne Webster, Deborah Rowe	Prospective	2016	Data collection in progress	
What does a high BMI mean in maternity?	Lesley Dixon, Jade Wratten, Jean Te Huia, Anna Seiuli	Qualitative	2015	Data collection	
Navigating the optimal adjustment to parenting for New Zealand women	Lesley Dixon, Sally Pairman, Karen Guilliland Aleksandra Macznik	Qualitative and Quantitative	Seeking funding		
Micronutrient intervention for perinatal depression and anxiety: A randomised Controlled Trial	Professor Julia Rucklidge, Hayley Bradley (PhD Student) Professor Roger Mulder, Dr Jacki Henderson	Quantitative	2016	Seeking funding	
4. Informing practice. Policy/guideline and service development					
NZCOM/Annual Reports 2004 to 2011	NZCOM & MMPO	NZCOMCORD	Each year from 2004		Published each year as a report 2013 & 2014 in development

Appendix 2

Previous research projects since 2007

Research priorities	Collaborations	Methodology	Commenced	Completed	Published
1. Supporting normal birth and normal childbirth physiology					
Midwives care during the third stage of labour Outcomes of physiological and active third stage labour care amongst women in New Zealand	Dixon, Tracy, Guilliland, Fletcher, Hendry & Pairman Dixon, Tracy, Guilliland, Fletcher, Hendry & Pairman	Retrospective cohort NZ COMCORD	2008	2009	<i>NZCOM Journal</i> 41 2009 & <i>Midwifery</i> 2011 29, 67-74
Midwives Expertise in Expectant Management (MEET Study)	Begley, Guilliland, Dixon, Reilly & Keegan	Qualitative	2010	2011	2011 <i>Midwifery</i>
Systematic review of the clinical effectiveness of the physiological management of the third stage of labor	Dixon, Fullerton, Begley, Kennedy, Guilliland	Systematic review	2009	2010	<i>International Journal of Childbirth</i> 2011 1, (3), 179-195
Planned Place of Birth in New Zealand: Does it affect Mode of Birth and Intervention Rates among low risk women	Davis, Baddock, Pairman, Hunter, Benn, Wilson, Dixon, Herbison & Anderson	NZ COMCORD	2009	2010	<i>Birth</i> 2011 38 (2), 111-119 <i>NZCOM Journal</i> 44
Risk of Severe Postpartum Haemorrhage in Low-risk Childbearing women in New Zealand: Exploring the Effect of Place of Birth and comparing third Stage Management in Labour	Davis, Baddock, Pairman, Hunter, Benn, Wilson, Dixon, Herbison & Anderson				
Giving Birth in New Zealand: Comparing the demographics characteristics and transfer rates for home and primary unit births	Dixon, Prileszky, Miller, Guilliland, Anderson	Retrospective cohort from NZ COMCORD	2011	2013	Paper submitted, presentation at JDRF
Midwives Expertise in protecting the perineum	Begley, Guilliland, Dixon, Gray	Qualitative	2013	Invitation of participants	
2. Supporting the Midwifery profession & professionalism					
Undergraduate students perspective of midwives	Newick, Vares, Dixon, Johnston & Guilliland	Qualitative	2011	2012	<i>NZCOM Journal</i> 47 (2013)
Midwifery graduates and the First Year of	Pairman, Tumilty, Dixon.	Quantitative	2011	Analysis &	Papers being

Practice Programme	Gray, Campbell, Lennox, Calvert & Kensington	Survey		report writing	prepared
3. Supporting women's and babies' health					
Smoke free outcomes with Midwifery Lead Maternity Carers 2004 to 2007	Dixon, Aimer, Fletcher, Guilliland, & Hendry	Retrospective cohort NZ COMCORD	2008	2009	NZCOM Journal 40 2009
Smoking demonstration project	Prilesky, Eddy, Nicholl, Ainsy & Barker	Qualitative	2012	2013	Report to MOH and paper being prepared
Smoke free outcomes with LMC 2008 to 2010	Andrews, Dixon, Fletcher, Hendry, Houston	Retrospective cohort NZ COMCORD	2012	2013	Two papers submitted – 3 rd to come
Obesity in pregnancy – LMC advice to women	Pan, Patterson, Campbell & Dixon	Survey	2012	analysis	Paper NZCOM Journal 50 (2014)
4. Informing practice. Policy/guideline and service development					
NZCOM/Annual Reports 2004 to 2011	NZCOM & MMPO	NZCOMCORD	Each year from 2004		Published each year as a report 2012 published 2013/14 in development

Appendix 3

Key expectations of research projects when researchers seek midwifery involvement

The College is cognisant of the need to ensure that midwives are not overloaded with requests for participation in research. Each region should carefully consider requests by researchers for access to their members. We have identified the following as a guide to support the regions when considering research requests.

When researchers request access to midwives for research purposes the researcher should provide the region with:

- A comprehensive research proposal outlining the purpose and method of the research, the ethical considerations and the expected outcomes.
- A copy of ethics application and approval letter when provided by the ethics committee. Access will not be granted if the ethics application is declined. When there is no ethics application required, then a description is to be provided outlining the ways in which ethical standards have been addressed in the proposed research.
- An outline of how the research will ensure that the anonymity and confidentiality of members will be retained (this may be in the research proposal).
- A copy of documentation (e.g. final questionnaire and information sheets) that will go to the membership

In addition, researchers should identify how they want midwives to be involved – as participants or to recruit women for their project.

In their consideration of the research project and whether they should circulate to their members the region should consider the following questions:

- 1. Does the research project meets the College’s guiding principles for research, which are:**
 - a) Strengthen knowledge and understanding of midwifery as an autonomous profession.

- b) Reflect the principles of partnership, protection and participation as identified in the Treaty of Waitangi.
- c) Reflect the needs of society and of women, particularly in relation to maternity services.
- d) Reflect the centrality of women inherent in the midwifery philosophy which has its foundation in practice and how midwives work with women.
- e) Reflect and meet the needs of the midwifery profession and the women and newborn for whom they provide midwifery care.
- f) Results will be accessible to all midwives and women through publication and dissemination via conferences, journals and workshops.

In addition to the foundational principles of partnership, protection and participation, recognition will be given to indigenous and non-Western methodologies, thereby supporting the special interests of some New Zealand midwives and creating a point of difference internationally.

Rationale: Midwifery is a relatively small professional group and individuals are easily identifiable. Therefore any research project that will be exploring midwifery care provision will need to ensure that midwives are not identifiable with confidentiality and anonymity prioritised and retained throughout the research process. Midwifery practice varies depending on the workplace setting, with New Zealand midwives able to work in self-employed practice or employed within hospital and primary facility settings. All research projects will require an understanding of the New Zealand maternity services and the context of midwifery practice. Additionally, it is an expectation that all data will be treated respectfully and outcomes considered within the context of the New Zealand maternity services and the frameworks of the midwifery profession.

2. Does the research fit within the College's research priorities?

Rationale: Resourcing of research is a contested space; the College has set research priorities to guide researchers to important projects for midwifery. It is helpful to ensure that research projects are building knowledge that fits with the College's research strategies. Midwives are frequently being targeted for research involvement, it is important to ensure that midwives are only asked to be involved in research that fits the research priorities as agreed by the profession. These are:

- Research supporting normal birth and normal childbirth physiology
- Investigation/research that supports and promotes midwifery practice and professionalism
- Investigation/research related to identifying and supporting optimal health for women, their babies, and their families during the maternity episode
- Investigation/research that can support and inform practice, policy/guideline development and maternity service provision

3. Are there midwives on the research team? Are they full members or data entry/recruitment only?

Rationale: It is an expectation that midwives are involved in the research as full members because they are then able to provide an understanding of the context of New Zealand midwifery and maternity care. In addition, having a midwife on the research team supports the College's strategy of improving collaboration between researchers. If there is no midwife on the team would the researchers be willing to involve a midwife as part of the team?

4. What is the background of the researcher?

Rationale: This will help identify the reliability and robustness of the research. If the researcher is doing the research as part of a post graduate higher degree (Master's or Doctorate) they will have support and supervision from a university/polytechnic department. If not, it is useful to find out what other research the applicant has undertaken and what has been published.

5. Who are the other researchers on the team? What university and department?

Who are the supervisors?

Rationale: This helps to build a picture of the robustness and reliability of the research. It will help to identify if there is sufficient academic support for the research.

6. Are there any conflicts of interest?

Rationale: It is important to know if there is any conflict around funding of the research. Who is funding the research, is funding from pharmaceuticals or milk marketing companies?

Feedback to the researcher

The region will determine how it deals with research applications. Some may set up a research group to consider each application. Once the application is reviewed a decision will be provided to the researcher.

This may be:

- 1) More information required – if the group is unclear on any particular aspect of the research application they may require further information from the researcher about the proposed research.
- 2) Access to the regional College membership is denied – in this situation the decision of the group is final. General feedback and rationale explaining this decision to be provided to the researcher.
- 3) Access to the regional College membership is supported – in this situation the following assurances are expected and implicit when access is provided:
 - a) An assurance that once the data collection is completed, information relating to the identity of individual College members will not be used for any other purposes and details are destroyed (all names and/or addresses).
 - b) An assurance that data collection will be used only for the research objectives as identified in the research proposal.
 - c) An assurance that the costs of access to the College regional membership will be met by the researchers.
 - d) An assurance that the authors will submit a paper to the NZCOM Journal outlining some of the results of the research once the project is completed.
 - e) An assurance that, if the authors are publishing the research in other journals, they will notify the group of the publication.

Further additional assurances may also be required by the governance group following review of the research protocol.

A letter outlining the result of that discussion will be sent to the researcher/s following the governance group meeting.

Checklist for research

Questions to ask about the research project	Yes/No
Does the research project meet the College's guiding principles for research?	
Does the research fit within the College's research priorities?	
Are there midwives on the research team? Are they full members or data entry/recruitment only?	
What is the background of the researcher?	
Who are the other researchers on the team? What university and department? Who are the supervisors?	
Are there any conflicts of interest?	