



from the president, new zealand college of midwives, nicole pihema

E kore e ngawhere, he maire tū wao, mā te toki e tua
(It will not give way easily; it is the forest-standing maire which requires an axe to fell it)

nau mai haere mai ki **Aotearoa New Zealand Midwife**

As this issue of *Midwife* goes to print, Omicron cases are surging and Aotearoa is seeing figures in the thousands for the first time since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Midwives throughout the motu are adapting to further shifts in the landscape and the future is even more uncertain than it was two years ago.

Much of the distress and anxiety currently being experienced by midwives and whānau is being outwardly expressed, but what can any of us do about the distress we can't see? I share a personal story of supporting a woman with invisible wounds inflicted by sexual abuse on p.18, in an attempt to raise awareness for the sake of other women who have suffered similar trauma.

The hazards of global heating for pregnant women and their babies (p.22) is the first topic to be explored as part of a new, regular feature on climate issues, and p.26 outlines key outcomes and trends from the Ministry's latest *Report on Maternity*.

Wairarapa-based midwife Fiona Girdwood shares her insights into isolated cleft palate and how midwives can identify it sooner on p.32, and the many achievements and contributions of retired Tongan midwife Fine Matoto are celebrated on p.39.

From Both Sides (p.42) focuses on the unique partnership formed between an MFYP mentor and mentee, and the positive ripple effect this can have for midwifery as a profession, when graduate midwives are made to feel safe from the beginning.

Mā te wā,

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Recently I was asked how we've been delivering care in Te Tai Tokerau throughout Covid-19 restrictions. It was a genuine enquiry about what modifications we have made to our processes in order to maintain safety. But it still stumped me. How have we been delivering care? The same way we have always delivered it, of course.

Admittedly, through lockdowns we carried out virtual or phone appointments, but we still met with women kanohi ki te kanohi if they were hapū with their first baby, or for essential visits. And now, our usual pre-Covid practice has resumed, with the extra steps of Covid-19 screening before appointments and the wearing of face masks.

We have all become familiar with the term 'post-Covid' and whilst it's important to acknowledge that indeed, we are living in a different world to some extent, it occurs to me that there is no place for such a thing as 'post-Covid midwifery practice'.

Yes, it has been challenging. Yes, care provision has been affected to a degree. And yes, each time we've thought we had a grasp on Covid-19 and what would happen next, the ground beneath us has shifted. At times it's felt as though collectively, we've been stuck in the maze from the movie *Labyrinth*: when older sister Sarah is desperately trying to rescue her baby brother Toby from the goblin king, but finds the stairs move or change direction every time she thinks she can see a clear path to reach him.

Care provision and the rules surrounding vaccination and potential exposure to the virus have changed many times over, but my

message to midwives is simple: just because we feel disorientated and disheartened every time a staircase moves or we find we are walking upside down, that doesn't mean we should just give up on ever reaching Toby.

Our worlds have probably never been riddled with this much uncertainty, but the wisdom of our tūpuna reveals that the key to our future lies in our past. Our individual motivations for becoming midwives may vary, but we all had a common goal before Covid-19 came along, and reminding ourselves of our original intentions is what will fortify us to rise above the widespread fear and anxiety in such trying times.

It's essential that as we go into the eye of this storm, we hold on more tightly than ever before, to our midwifery integrity and sense of whānau - the connectedness we are all meant to feel in order to take others as a part of ourselves and protect those we have been given the privilege of caring for. The opening whakatauki mirrors this notion; a maire standing alone does not have the same strength as one in the forest, or in other words, a person with many supporters has more power than one acting alone.

I acknowledge midwives all over Aotearoa currently grappling with challenges; questioning what midwifery looks like and why, and desperately searching for something to hold on to for security and stability. And I implore midwives to dig deeper. We alone hold the keys to our inner peace, and we owe it to the whānau we care for to find it, so that we can serve as pou - unwavering in the storm - for whānau to tether themselves to, as they navigate their own journeys. ■