

## EDITORIAL

### “Turn left at the large flax.”

### How times have changed

Jean Patterson, sub-editor

This year major health reforms have commenced which will change the structure and delivery of health services throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. It is unclear at present what these will mean for midwives but there is no doubt that there will be some impact on how midwives work.

Communication technology has already changed the way in which we work. I was recently rummaging through some old midwifery notes when I found a yellowed, pencilled map with the inscription: *Turn left at the large flax, carry on to the sheep yards on the right, turn left up the gravel road - we are on the 3rd bend on the left, blue house, dogs under control.* This reminded me of how tricky communications were in rural south Otago without the aid of rapid numbers for rural properties and cell phone technology. If I got lost, I called into the nearest homestead and asked if I could use their phone.

Similarly, when reading the Journal archives in preparation for this editorial, I was again reminded of our very grounded and passionate progress over the decades without the aid of the communication technology available today.

Contributions to the Journal in the early 1990s focused on our political struggle for an independent and skilled profession, and the issues featured a mix of practice wisdom together with our professional aspirations – the layout simple in style. By 1998 the focus was on woman-centred care with the publication of the ‘midwifery partnership’ monograph. Research papers began to appear more frequently alongside the political and practical midwifery advice.

By the turn of the century in 2000, in addition to practice advice, and student contributions in the student section, the readership was being urged to submit research papers with midwives exhorted to bridge the midwifery research/practice gap. This enabled the Midwifery News (now titled Midwife Aotearoa New Zealand) to continue the important task of keeping members informed on important practice and political issues.

Over the years the Journal has morphed into one that reflects midwifery scholarship which is enhanced by the number of midwives now completing master’s and PhD studies. The increase in educational opportunities and the attainment of higher qualifications, however, have not dampened the practice focus and passion of our profession, as the articles remain grounded in practice and reflective of Aotearoa New Zealand’s autonomous midwifery profession.

Just as the academic growth of midwifery knowledge has been facilitated by the burgeoning of communication technologies, likewise the College took the decision to publish the Journal online. Electronic copies of the Journal are available on the College website and articles can easily be sourced by an international readership from the CINAHL, Scopus and



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ProQuest databases – representing a notable change in the chronography of the Journal.

While these moves improved access to the Journal, some midwives missed the arrival in the mail of the familiar hard copy when Issue 47 went online in June 2013. While the more regular mailings of individual articles have changed the nature of the Journal, the annual online publication of all the articles published throughout the year has now become something that readers look forward to as the year pulls to a close.

Midwifery in Aotearoa is, in many ways, entering a new era which will once again change the way we view our profession, and the way in which we work. Such changes include the embracing of a co-governance model that will better reflect the shape and needs of our population and move closer to meeting our Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities and developments in midwifery education. (But these changes would need another editorial to address adequately.) There is no doubt that there are further changes in terms of technology that we are not yet even aware of. It is indeed a time of change.

Meanwhile, we remain acutely aware that the success of the Journal rests on contributions from authors who have a story to tell or research findings to publish. It is also reliant on the dedication of our reviewers and sub-editors who take the time to carefully read and comment on the articles. Having had the privilege of being a small part of the Journal for much of its history, I look forward to seeing it continue to flourish and reflect midwifery practice and scholarship into a more equitable future.

(My thanks to Lorna Davies for her contribution to this editorial.)

Wishing you a peaceful and restful holiday season from the Editorial Team.

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