



## EDITORIAL

# Triumphant tides: The rise of Pacific midwifery research in Aotearoa New Zealand

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I was privileged to join the editorial board of the *New Zealand College of Midwives Journal* | *Te Hautaka o te Kāreti ngā Kaiwhakawhānau ki Aotearoa* in July 2024. This milestone formally introduced a Pacific lens into this midwifery research space. My time on the editorial board has been enlightening, allowing me to learn the editorial process in a supportive environment, while immersing myself in the breadth and depth of midwifery research across Aotearoa.

As we present the 61st issue of the College Journal, which is in its 36th year, we are excited to be actively showcasing greater diversity in the research shared. This commitment enables us to amplify minority voices and introduce vital new perspectives. Ultimately, this serves to strengthen the entire profession, helping us evolve and provide increasingly culturally safe care to the whānau and communities we serve.

One of these key communities is Pacific peoples, and in this issue of the Journal, we are pleased to share research on Pasifika perspectives of mentoring in Aotearoa (Otukolo et al., 2025).

### Defining the Pacific research mandate

The Journal is committed to research that promotes equity and inclusion in healthcare and serves as a supportive platform for advancing Indigenous research. This commitment is both timely and critical. For more than a decade, data has consistently shown that for Pacific women, babies and families, outcomes have remained dire, and access to culturally safe care continues to be a challenge (Perinatal and Maternal Mortality Review Committee [PMMRC], 2024; Rippon & Woon, 2024). Over the period from 2006 to 2021, Pacific peoples (along with Māori) had more than twice the rate of maternal mortality compared to NZ European women (PMMRC, 2024). The current Pacific midwifery workforce is also critically under-represented, making up only 4% of the workforce (Te Tatau o te Whare Kahu | Midwifery Council, 2025). Addressing these persistent inequities demands Pacific-led solutions, grounded in authentic cultural wisdom, which only Pacific researchers can justly deliver.

### A new era of cultural scholarship

Pacific researchers are unequivocally best positioned to investigate Pacific midwifery issues. This is rooted in epistemological authority

and accountability. They approach topics like the maternity experiences of Pacific whānau and Pacific midwifery workforce sustainability, not as external observers, but through the intrinsic lens of Pacific worldviews and cultural wisdom.

This ensures research questions, methodologies (e.g. *Talanoa*, *Kakala*, *Tivaevae*, *Veivosaki-Yaga*) and interpretations are culturally congruent, moving beyond surface-level awareness to deep immersion. Furthermore, a Pacific researcher carries an inherent obligation of reciprocity to their community, mitigating the risk of extractive research practices and ensuring findings are justly returned to uplift and empower the people they serve.

### Pacific research - impact and future

Currently, in midwifery in Aotearoa, there is a notable triumph: we are celebrating the largest cohort yet of Pacific midwives undertaking postgraduate study. This signals an important shift for the midwifery research landscape, moving the voices of Pacific midwives from being subjects of inquiry to becoming the drivers of change. In discussions with Pacific midwives undertaking postgraduate education, their current and planned research topics were shared:

- Exploring barriers to early engagement with Lead Maternity Carer (LMC) midwifery care and identifying culturally safe facilitators for Pacific women in South Auckland
- The psychosocial impact of traditional Pacific 'adoption' practices (e.g., *Vae Tama*, *Tamariki āngai*) on emotional wellbeing and belonging
- Pacific conceptualisations of perinatal depression
- The lived experience of Pacific women with diabetes in pregnancy: Barriers and facilitators to accessing and integrating antenatal nutrition education in Aotearoa
- Collective wellbeing for Pacific LMC midwives and their families in Aotearoa

The breadth of this Pacific midwifery research is encouraging. Because of the inherent cultural wisdom and commitment to improving outcomes in their communities that Pacific midwives bring, investing in this new and enthusiastic generation of researchers is a pathway to improved and equitable health outcomes that Aotearoa needs.

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It is a true privilege to witness and be a part of this monumental shift and what the future will bring.

Wishing you all a peaceful and safe festive season from the editorial team.

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Ngā mihi

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