

The Scottish Midwifery Research Collaboration

Background:

Within Scotland the NHS aims to provide care which is person centred, safe and effective and to ensure that maternity care provision provides an internationally recognised model of excellence. To achieve these aspirations and lasting improvements in the health and wellbeing of mothers and babies, high quality primary research and translational research is required to inform and support clinicians, maternity service leads and healthcare policy makers. Midwives have a pivotal role in the health and social care of mothers and babies and so are ideally placed to implement existing, effective interventions in efficient and woman-centred ways, and to develop and test new interventions and models of care. Scotland is an excellent place in which to conduct maternity care research, we have close links with clinical midwives and midwife managers across Scotland, established professional networks and a rich geographical and demographic context in which to undertake research which is of international relevance.

The recently formed Scottish Midwifery Research Collaboration is a joint HEI initiative, co-ordinated by the Nursing Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research Unit (NMAHP RU). It is a unique initiative in midwifery research bringing together leading midwife researchers from HEIs and the NHS across Scotland with the aim of creating a critical mass of experienced researchers who have the skills and experience to develop and lead a sustainable programme of research in maternal and child health.

Aims and Objectives:

We aim to conduct research that improves the health and wellbeing of women and babies in Scotland and beyond and which is internationally recognised for excellence and creativity.

Our objectives are:

- To provide and develop strategic midwifery research leadership and a coordinated approach to midwifery research in Scotland.
- To develop a critical mass of high quality midwifery principal investigators capable of supporting large scale exploratory, epidemiological and intervention based studies.
- To develop a programme of international level research which focuses on workstreams of high impact and importance with potential for major health gain for mothers and babies.
- To produce regular research outputs that will inform practice, be judged of internationally excellent standing.

While the research projects developed by the Collaboration will be led by midwives the research projects will be multidisciplinary, drawing on all the research

skills required to conduct high quality research. We aim to build midwifery research capacity by involving a wider group of midwives as co-applicants and researchers in funded research projects and by seeking funded PhD studentships.



Research Themes

The Collaboration research team has particular expertise in research relating to models of maternity care delivery, mother and infant nutrition, decision making and health informatics. We have methodological expertise in qualitative and quantitative research and experience in developing and testing complex interventions, randomised controlled trials and cluster trials. Our research will focus on three main themes:

- Improving health and reducing health and social inequalities – maternal and infant nutrition, healthy behaviours during pregnancy, communities – rural issues
- Models of care and service delivery – improving quality of care, reduction of interventions and Caesarean section
- Improving women's experience of care – involvement in care decision making

The Scottish Government Chief Nurse's Office has provided funding to underpin the establishment of the Collaboration and to fund three foundational research projects focussed on key areas of importance to maternity care in Scotland.

1. Integrating contrasting models of social and clinical assessment within an ecological framework that supports strength-based well-being assessment and planning with women in maternity care (Professor Helen Cheyne).
2. Mode of birth after caesarean section: Implementation of a tailored quality improvement intervention in Scotland (Professor Tracy Humphrey).
3. Alcohol in Pregnancy: validation of a sensitive diary-based questionnaire [AlcoPreg] (Dr Andrew Symon).

The Collaboration Researchers:

Professor Helen Cheyne. Helen is Professor of Maternal and Child Health in the Nursing Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research Unit based at University of Stirling, where she leads research in maternity care and health care decision making.

Dr Andrew Symon. Andrew is a Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing & Midwifery, University of Dundee. His current research interests include reducing health inequalities and health improvement through promotion of healthy behaviors' during pregnancy and the postnatal period.

Dr Heather Whitford. Heather is a Lecturer in Midwifery, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Dundee. Her research interests relate to the promotion of healthy behaviour during pregnancy and the postnatal period, applications of technology in healthcare and addressing health inequalities.

Professor Tracy Humphrey. Tracy is Clinical Professor of Midwifery, Robert Gordon University/NHS Grampian. She has used a range of methodological approaches to undertake research in women-centred care and interventions during pregnancy and childbirth.

Dr Rhona McInnes. Rhona is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health at the University of Stirling. Her key research interests lie within the public health and the early years and the role of the midwife in facilitating healthy choices and parental decision-making.

Dr Jean Rankin. Jean is a Senior Lecturer at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS). She has undertaken research utilising both quantitative and qualitative research methods and her research interests include the transition to parenthood, perinatal mental health, physical activity, and breastfeeding.

Dr Helen Bryers. Helen is Head of Midwifery for NHS Highland and an honorary research fellow with the Centre for Rural Health, University of Aberdeen. Her research interests include the delivery of sustainable models of maternity services to remote and rural areas and the importance of 'local birth' to a sense of belonging within communities.

Professor Ruth Deery. Ruth is Professor in Maternal Health with the University of the West of Scotland and NHS Ayrshire & Arran. She has undertaken research which applies sociological and political theory and action research to the organisational culture of midwifery. Her particular interests are in organisational culture and change, public policy, emotions and care and critical obesity using qualitative, observational and ethnographic methods.

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