

Knowledge as power

As we launch this first issue of African Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health (AJM), we must think critically about our mission and the tools that can enhance fulfillment of this mission. The complexity of midwifery and women's health in Africa will be reflected in the journal, which will provide a forum for topical debates on clinical and professional issues. Research and education will be integral to each issue, encouraging advanced skills, knowledge transfer and academic discussions. Dissemination of information and utilization of knowledge will provide powerful tools in midwifery and women's health, to promote our professional image as well as improving health care delivery for women, children and their families.

We must use the knowledge–power duality to maximum advantage

Although there is a lot of debate on the definitions of knowledge and power, it is usually understood that the techniques of knowledge and strategies of power may be viewed as mutually inherent. Power is based on knowledge and makes use of knowledge; on the other hand, power reproduces knowledge by shaping it in accordance with its anonymous intentions. For instance, a midwife with professional knowledge and experience is respected and considered powerful in the field by clients as well as colleagues because he or she is able to assess problems, make clinically sound decisions, and act appropriately within the scope of midwifery practice. The person is also able to interact and consult collegially with fellow midwives and other health care professionals. A knowledgeable midwife is well equipped to focus on appropriate policies and programmes that bring about positive health outcomes. Without adequate knowledge, preparation and experience, health care providers do not feel empowered to influence any change. When power is obtained, especially in terms of strategies, methods and support systems, the process of creating or advancing knowledge is enhanced.

This journal offers an opportunity for midwives and other related professions, especially in Africa and other lower income countries, to maximize their contribution to the growth of midwifery science and improve the image of the profession. The publications and debate on educational innovations and clinical practice will enhance identification of best practices.

“... it is our responsibility to ... create the knowledge that will foster professional development, as well as benefit women, their families and communities.”

Beyond the duality

As responsible professionals, we are required to go beyond the duality of creating knowledge for power and using power to create knowledge. The knowledge we create has to be grounded in methods that respect the management theory as well as scientific inquiry. Although this is a broad topic, subject to increasing criticism on how various models are described, knowledge management seeks to understand the way in which knowledge is created, used and shared. What is important is that there is a link between data, information and knowledge; it is our responsibility to make sure that we obtain the necessary tools and support to create the knowledge that will foster professional development as well as benefit women, their families and communities. We will be more powerful if we ensure that the right information is delivered to the right person(s) at the right time, in order to take the most informed decisions. Our decisions and actions have implications for individuals, programmes and policies.

A powerful tool for midwifery and women's health

This journal is an exciting and powerful tool that we must use and embrace to support midwifery and women's health. I urge all readers to engage with the journal, not only by reading the papers, but by submitting papers (research, clinical and educational), submitting letters and debating issues. Furthermore, we hope that the journal will act as a springboard for further inquiry and professional discussions.

As Editor-in-Chief I would like to welcome you as a reader to this first edition of the journal and I hope that it meets your expectations.



Helen Lugina
Editor-in-Chief

AJM

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African Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health

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