Midwifery publishes the latest peer reviewed international research to inform the safety, quality, outcomes and experiences of pregnancy, birth and maternity care for childbearing women, their babies and families. The journal’s publications support midwives and maternity care providers to explore and develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes informed by best available evidence.

Midwifery provides an international, interdisciplinary forum for the publication, dissemination and discussion of advances in evidence, controversies and current research, and promotes continuing education through publication of systematic and other scholarly reviews and updates. Midwifery articles cover the cultural, clinical, psycho-social, sociological, epidemiological, education, managerial, workforce, organizational and technological areas of practice in preconception, maternal and infant care, maternity services and other health systems.

The journal welcomes the highest quality scholarly research that employs rigorous methodology. Midwifery is a leading international journal in midwifery and maternal health with a current Impact Factor of 2.640 (2021 Journal Citation Reports, Clarivate Analytics 2022) and employs a double-blind peer review process.

ABSTRACTING AND INDEXING

Scopus
PubMed/Medline
CINAHL
ASSIA
Current Contents - Social & Behavioral Sciences
Social Scisearch
Research Alert
Referativnyi Zhurnal VINTI-RAN (Russian Academy of Sciences)
Medis (Online)
Index Top 100™
ENB Health Care Database
EMCARE
EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-Chief
Debra Bick, University of Warwick, England, United Kingdom

Associate Editors
charlotte overgaard, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark
Yan-Shing Chang, King's College London Florence Nightingale, Faculty of Nursing Midwifery & Palliative Care, London, United Kingdom
Kirstie Coxon, St George's University of London, London, United Kingdom
Marie Furuta, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan
Briony Hill, Monash University Health and Social Care Unit, Melbourne, Australia

Emeritus Editor
Ann Thomson, The University of Manchester Division of Nursing Midwifery and Social Work, University Place, Oxford Road, M13 9PL, Manchester, United Kingdom

International News Editor
Elizabeth Duff

Midwifery Editorial Office
Email: ymidw@elsevier.com

Editorial Committee
Lesley Barclay, Northern Rivers University, Department of Rural Health, Lismore, New South Wales, Australia
Helen Cheyne, University of Stirling, Stirling, United Kingdom
Amy Levi, The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, United States of America
Ans Luyben, Simmental-Thun-Saanenland Hospital Group, Thun, Switzerland
Marianne Nieuwenhuijze, University of Midwifery Education and Studies, Maastricht, Netherlands
Edwin van Teijlingen, Bournemouth University, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Bournemouth, United Kingdom

International Advisory Board
Jo Alexander, Bournemouth, United Kingdom
Rondi Anderson, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Cathy Ashwin, Nottingham, United Kingdom
Stephanie Brown, Parkville, Australia
Rona Campbell, Bristol, United Kingdom
Ngai Fen Cheung, Hangzhou, China
Helen Cooke, Randwick, New South Wales, Australia
Debra Creedy, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
Gene Declerq, Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America
Ruth Deery, Hamilton, South Lanarkshire, United Kingdom
Simone Diniz, SAO PAULO, Brazil
Maralyn Foureur, Callaghan, Australia
Ling-ling Gao, Guangzhou, China
Atf Gherissi, Rommana, Tunisia
Maria Luiza Gonzalez Riesco, SAO PAULO, Brazil
Ian Graham, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Ingegerd Hildingsson, Sundsvall, Sweden
Vanora Hundley, Bournemouth, United Kingdom
Billie Hunter, Cardiff, United Kingdom
Rafat Jan, Karachi, Pakistan
Abdul Jokhio, Karachi, Pakistan
Christine Kettle, Stafford, United Kingdom
Mavis Kirkham, Sheffield, United Kingdom
Su-Chen Kuo, Taipei, Taiwan
Tina Lavender, Manchester, United Kingdom
Céline Lemay, Trois-Rivières, Quebec, Canada
Christina Lindhardt, Odense, Denmark
Gaynor Maclean, Guildford, England, United Kingdom
Patricia McInerney, Johannesburg, South Africa
Nester Moyo, Coevorden, Netherlands
Lesley Page, London, United Kingdom
Hora Soltani, Sheffield, United Kingdom
Joyce Thompson, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States of America
Jane Yelland, Parkville, VIC, Australia
GUIDE FOR AUTHORS

Your Paper Your Way
We now differentiate between the requirements for new and revised submissions. You may choose to submit your manuscript as a single Word or PDF file to be used in the refereeing process. Only when your paper is at the revision stage, will you be requested to put your paper in to a 'correct format' for acceptance and provide the items required for the publication of your article.
To find out more, please visit the Preparation section below.

INTRODUCTION
Dr Debra Bick, the Editor of Midwifery, welcomes manuscripts for consideration for publication in the journal.

Uniform Requirements
These guidelines generally follow the 'Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals', published by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). Midwifery is a signatory journal to the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals, issued by the International Committee for Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), and to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) code of conduct for Editors. We follow COPE's guidelines.

Article types
Full length articles should consist of 5000 words at most (excluding tables and references). Commentaries should be 2000 words at most (excluding references).

Submission checklist
You can use this list to carry out a final check of your submission before you send it to the journal for review. Please check the relevant section in this Guide for Authors for more details.

Ensure that the following items are present:

One author has been designated as the corresponding author with contact details:
• E-mail address
• Full postal address

All necessary files have been uploaded:
Manuscript:
• Include keywords
• All figures (include relevant captions)
• All tables (including titles, description, footnotes)
• Ensure all figure and table citations in the text match the files provided
• Indicate clearly if color should be used for any figures in print
Graphical Abstracts / Highlights files (where applicable)

Please note that the journal does not accept submissions of Case Study article types

BEFORE YOU BEGIN
Before you start we also suggest you look at the style of language and terminology used in the journal.

More details are provided later in these instructions. First time authors are strongly advised to co-author with an academic supervisor or experienced colleague who has been successful in writing for publication. Articles submitted for review must be original works, and may not be submitted for review elsewhere whilst under review for the Journal.

If a related article, based on the same work, has been submitted or published elsewhere, it must be acknowledged in the cover letter to the editor, added to the end of the cover letter, and referenced in the manuscript.

Considerations specific to types of research designs. Manuscripts must adhere to recognised reporting guidelines relevant to the research design.
CLINICAL TRIALS

We require the registration of all interventional trials, whether early or late phase, in a primary register that participates in WHO's International Clinical Trial Registry Platform (International Clinical Trial Registry Platform [http://www.who.int/ictrp/ network/trds/en/index] or in ClinicalTrials.gov, in accord with ICMJE recommendations [http://clinicaltrials.gov ICMJE recommendations http://icmje.org/recommendations/browse/ publishing-and-editorial-issues/ clinical-trial-registration.htm]). The trial must be registered prospectively before the first participant is recruited, and full details including the name of the trial register and the clinical trial registration number must be included in the abstract.

We encourage full public disclosure of the minimum 21-item trial registration dataset at the time of registration and before recruitment of the first participant. Reports of trials must conform to CONSORT 2010 guidelines and should be submitted with their protocols. Authors must include a statement in their abstract if their study is not appropriate for registration in a trials registry.

Midwifery encourages the appropriate registration of all intervention studies, including observational quasi-experimental clinical studies and studies that do not include clinical outcomes. A study registration site (such as the Center for Open Science (cos.io)) should be used to register their study.

For all studies

Please upload the appropriate and completed Reporting Guideline Checklist during your manuscript submission process. To find reporting guidelines see: [http://www.equator-network.org]

STROBE - Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (observational cohort, case control and cross sectional studies)

STROBE Checklist Quasi-experimental/non-randomised evaluations

TREND - Transparent Reporting of Evaluations with Non-randomized Designs [http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/trend/]

CONSORT - Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials. [http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/consort/]

STARD - Standards for the Reporting of Diagnostic Accuracy Studies. [http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/stard/]


FOR ALL STUDIES

Please upload the appropriate and completed Reporting Guideline Checklist during your manuscript submission process. To find reporting guidelines see: [http://www.equator-network.org]

STROBE - Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (observational cohort, case control and cross sectional studies)

TREND - Transparent Reporting of Evaluations with Non-randomized Designs [http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/trend/]

CONSORT - Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials. [http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/consort/]

STARD - Standards for the Reporting of Diagnostic Accuracy Studies. [http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/stard/]


SQUIRE - Standards for Quality Improvement Reporting Excellence.
MMAT - Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool
STREGA - genetic association studies

**Studies in humans and animals**

Human and animal rights Ethics in Research - It is important to note that original research studies that do not have appropriate ethical approvals prior to being conducted will be rejected at submission stage. We will consider publication, if the relevant Institutional Ethics Committee provides you with a letter saying that they do not normally provide ethical approval for studies such as the one you conducted. See COPE Guidelines at: http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines

**Human Research**

If the work involves use of human subjects, authors should ensure that the work described has been carried out in accordance with The Code of Ethics of the World Medical Association (Declaration of Helsinki). Please address the ethical aspects of the research in the Methods section. State clearly that the subject gave freely informed consent and, if in dependent relationships with members of the research team, issues of perceived coercion must be addressed. To clarify, women and their families, and students are in dependent relationship with researchers and must not be directly approached by the research team to give consent on-the-spot. Participating or not participating in the research must not disadvantage participants in a dependent relationship. Any benefit for participating must not constitute a financial inducement. Participant anonymity must be preserved, unless express written approval to use identifying data is provided. The author must retain written consents, or evidence that such consents have been obtained, must be provided to Elsevier on request.

Authors who have written permission from unmasked people appearing in photographs must submit the person/s permission/s online during the manuscript submission process. For more information, please review the Elsevier Policy on the Use of Images or Personal Information of Patients or other Individuals, https://www.elsevier.com/patient-consent-policy. Unless you have written permission from the person (or, where applicable, the next of kin), the personal details of any person included in any part of the article and in any supplementary materials (including all illustrations and videos) must be removed before submission.

**Animal Research**

All animal experiments should comply with the ARRIVE guidelines and should be carried out in accordance with the UK Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act, 1986 and associated guidelines, EU Directive 2010/63/EU for animal experiments, or the National Research Council's Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals and the authors should clearly indicate in the manuscript that such guidelines have been followed. The sex of the animals must be indicated, and where appropriate, the influence (or association) of sex on the results of the study.

**ETHICS_IN_PUBLISHING**

The journal follows the Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines and requests authors to familiarise themselves with these guidelines at: http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines.

A few issues that authors need to pay particular attention to are set out below.

It is ethically questionable to break up or segment data from a single study to create different papers for publication - a practice called 'salami slicing'. If the authors have legitimate reasons for reporting separately on different parts of the same study, or the same data set, they should justify that to the editor at the time of submission. Equally, readers need to be aware that different aspects of the same study are being reported, thus the methods section of the submitted manuscript must clearly explain why the submitted paper is justified.

Use of inclusive language. Inclusive language acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities. Articles should make no assumptions about the beliefs or commitments of any reader, should contain nothing which might imply that one individual is superior to another on the grounds of race, sex, culture or any other characteristic, and should use inclusive language throughout. Authors should ensure that writing is free from bias,
for instance by using 'he or she', 'his/her' instead of 'he' or 'his', and by making use of job titles that are free of stereotyping (e.g. 'chairperson' instead of 'chairman' and 'flight attendant' instead of 'stewardess').

Midwifery requires that authors use woman centred language including referring to births rather than deliveries, to give birth rather than deliver and women rather than patients. Papers that do not adhere to these guidelines will not proceed to peer review. Our journal uses UK spelling, for example, recognise rather than recognize. We also spell fetal rather than foetal.

**Engagement of public in research**
Please highlight in your text how you have involved those who use the maternity services in your research and how your work has been informed by their involvement, including identification of priorities, designing the research or supporting the research. If engagement of members of the public was not appropriate for your research, please include a statement as to why.

**Reporting sex- and gender-based analyses**

**Reporting guidance**
For research involving or pertaining to humans, animals or eukaryotic cells, investigators should integrate sex and gender-based analyses (SGBA) into their research design according to funder/sponsor requirements and best practices within a field. Authors should address the sex and/or gender dimensions of their research in their article. In cases where they cannot, they should discuss this as a limitation to their research's generalizability. Importantly, authors should explicitly state what definitions of sex and/or gender they are applying to enhance the precision, rigor and reproducibility of their research and to avoid ambiguity or conflation of terms and the constructs to which they refer (see Definitions section below). Authors can refer to the [Sex and Gender Equity in Research (SAGER) guidelines](#) and the SAGER guidelines checklist. These offer systematic approaches to the use and editorial review of sex and gender information in study design, data analysis, outcome reporting and research interpretation - however, please note there is no single, universally agreed-upon set of guidelines for defining sex and gender.

**Definitions**
Sex generally refers to a set of biological attributes that are associated with physical and physiological features (e.g., chromosomal genotype, hormonal levels, internal and external anatomy). A binary sex categorization (male/female) is usually designated at birth (“sex assigned at birth”), most often based solely on the visible external anatomy of a newborn. Gender generally refers to socially constructed roles, behaviors, and identities of women, men and gender-diverse people that occur in a historical and cultural context and may vary across societies and over time. Gender influences how people view themselves and each other, how they behave and interact and how power is distributed in society. Sex and gender are often incorrectly portrayed as binary (female/male or woman/man) and unchanging whereas these constructs actually exist along a spectrum and include additional sex categorizations and gender identities such as people who are intersex/have differences of sex development (DSD) or identify as non-binary. Moreover, the terms "sex" and "gender" can be ambiguous—thus it is important for authors to define the manner in which they are used. In addition to this definition guidance and the SAGER guidelines, the resources on this page offer further insight around sex and gender in research studies.

**Informed consent and patient details**
Studies on patients or volunteers require ethics committee approval and informed consent, which should be documented in the paper. Appropriate consents, permissions and releases must be obtained where an author wishes to include case details or other personal information or images of patients and any other individuals in an Elsevier publication. Written consents must be retained by the author but copies should not be provided to the journal. Only if specifically requested by the journal in exceptional circumstances (for example if a legal issue arises) the author must provide copies of the consents or evidence that such consents have been obtained. For more information, please review the Elsevier Policy on the Use of Images or Personal Information of Patients or other Individuals. Unless you have written permission from the patient (or, where applicable, the next of kin), the personal details of any patient included in any part of the article and in any supplementary materials (including all illustrations and videos) must be removed before submission.
Declaration of competing interest
All authors must disclose any financial and personal relationships with other people or organizations that could inappropriately influence (bias) their work. Examples of potential conflicts of interest include employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria, paid expert testimony, patent applications/registrations, and grants or other funding. Authors should complete the declaration of competing interest statement using this template and upload to the submission system at the Attach/Upload Files step. Note: Please do not convert the .docx template to another file type. Author signatures are not required. If there are no interests to declare, please choose the first option in the template. More information.

Declaration of Interest
All authors are requested to disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest including any financial, personal or other relationships with other people or organizations within three years of beginning the submitted work that could inappropriately influence, or be perceived to influence, their work. More information.

Use of inclusive language
Inclusive language acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities. Content should make no assumptions about the beliefs or commitments of any reader; contain nothing which might imply that one individual is superior to another on the grounds of age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, disability or health condition; and use inclusive language throughout. Authors should ensure that writing is free from bias, stereotypes, slang, reference to dominant culture and/or cultural assumptions. We advise to seek gender neutrality by using plural nouns ("clinicians, patients/clients") as default/wherever possible to avoid using "he, she," or "he/she." We recommend avoiding the use of descriptors that refer to personal attributes such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, disability or health condition unless they are relevant and valid. When coding terminology is used, we recommend to avoid offensive or exclusionary terms such as "master", "slave", "blacklist" and "whitelist". We suggest using alternatives that are more appropriate and (self-) explanatory such as "primary", "secondary", "blocklist" and "allowlist". These guidelines are meant as a point of reference to help identify appropriate language but are by no means exhaustive or definitive.

Contributors
Those who meet some but not all of the criteria for authors can be identified as 'contributors' with their contribution specified. All those individuals who provided help during the research (e.g., collecting data, providing language help, writing assistance or proofreading the article, etc.) that do not meet criteria for authorship should be acknowledged in the paper. Acknowledgments should be added to the title page if applicable.

Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing
The below guidance only refers to the writing process, and not to the use of AI tools to analyse and draw insights from data as part of the research process.

Where authors use generative artificial intelligence (AI) and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process, authors should only use these technologies to improve readability and language. Applying the technology should be done with human oversight and control, and authors should carefully review and edit the result, as AI can generate authoritative-sounding output that can be incorrect, incomplete or biased. AI and AI-assisted technologies should not be listed as an author or co-author, or be cited as an author. Authorship implies responsibilities and tasks that can only be attributed to and performed by humans, as outlined in Elsevier’s AI policy for authors.

Authors should disclose in their manuscript the use of AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process by following the instructions below. A statement will appear in the published work. Please note that authors are ultimately responsible and accountable for the contents of the work.

Disclosure instructions
Authors must disclose the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process by adding a statement at the end of their manuscript in the core manuscript file, before the References list. The statement should be placed in a new section entitled 'Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process'.

AUTHOR INFORMATION PACK 26 Jul 2023 www.elsevier.com/locate/midw 7
Statement: During the preparation of this work the author(s) used [NAME TOOL / SERVICE] in order to [REASON]. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

This declaration does not apply to the use of basic tools for checking grammar, spelling, references etc. If there is nothing to disclose, there is no need to add a statement.

Author contributions
For transparency, we require corresponding authors to provide co-author contributions to the manuscript using the relevant CRediT roles. The CRediT taxonomy includes 14 different roles describing each contributor’s specific contribution to the scholarly output. The roles are: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Funding acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Roles/Writing - original draft; and Writing - review & editing. Note that not all roles may apply to every manuscript, and authors may have contributed through multiple roles. More details and an example.

AUTHORSHIP
We have adopted the guidelines of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html

Legitimate authors are those that made substantial contributions to all of the following: (1) the conception and design of the study, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data, (2) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content, (3) final approval of the version to be submitted. All potential authors are those that meet requirement (1) above and these people should not be excluded from contributing to the writing and approval of the article.

All authors are required to provide a Conflict of Interest Statement and should complete a standard form, which is available at


All authors must disclose, in the covering letter to the editor and on the title page of the manuscript, any actual or potential conflict of interest, including financial and personal relationships with people or organizations within three years of beginning the submitted work that could inappropriately influence (bias) their work. Examples of potential conflicts of interest include employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria, paid expert testimony, patent applications/registrations, and grants or other funding. See also https://www.elsevier.com/conflictofinterest.

During the online submission process, we ask you make a true statement that all authors meet the criteria for authorship and that all people entitled to authorship are listed as authors.

Changes to authorship
Authors are expected to consider carefully the list and order of authors before submitting their manuscript and provide the definitive list of authors at the time of the original submission. Any addition, deletion or rearrangement of author names in the authorship list should be made only before the manuscript has been accepted and only if approved by the journal Editor. To request such a change, the Editor must receive the following from the corresponding author: (a) the reason for the change in author list and (b) written confirmation (e-mail, letter) from all authors that they agree with the addition, removal or rearrangement. In the case of addition or removal of authors, this includes confirmation from the author being added or removed.

Only in exceptional circumstances will the Editor consider the addition, deletion or rearrangement of authors after the manuscript has been accepted. While the Editor considers the request, publication of the manuscript will be suspended. If the manuscript has already been published in an online issue, any requests approved by the Editor will result in a corrigendum.

All authors should have made substantial contributions to all of the following: (1) the conception and design of the study, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data, (2) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content, (3) final approval of the version to be submitted.

AUTHOR INFORMATION PACK 26 Jul 2023 www.elsevier.com/locate/midw
**Submission declaration and verification**
Submission of an article implies that the work described has not been published previously (except in the form of an abstract, a published lecture or academic thesis, see 'Multiple, redundant or concurrent publication' for more information), that it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, that its publication is approved by all authors and tacitly or explicitly by the responsible authorities where the work was carried out, and that, if accepted, it will not be published elsewhere in the same form, in English or in any other language, including electronically without the written consent of the copyright-holder. To verify compliance, your article may be checked by Crossref Similarity Check and other originality or duplicate checking software.

**Article transfer service**
This journal uses the Elsevier Article Transfer Service to find the best home for your manuscript. This means that if an editor feels your manuscript is more suitable for an alternative journal, you might be asked to consider transferring the manuscript to such a journal. The recommendation might be provided by a Journal Editor, a dedicated Scientific Managing Editor, a tool assisted recommendation, or a combination. If you agree, your manuscript will be transferred, though you will have the opportunity to make changes to the manuscript before the submission is complete. Please note that your manuscript will be independently reviewed by the new journal. More information.

**Copyright**
Upon acceptance of an article, authors will be asked to complete a 'Journal Publishing Agreement' (see more information on this). An e-mail will be sent to the corresponding author confirming receipt of the manuscript together with a 'Journal Publishing Agreement' form or a link to the online version of this agreement.

Subscribers may reproduce tables of contents or prepare lists of articles including abstracts for internal circulation within their institutions. Permission of the Publisher is required for resale or distribution outside the institution and for all other derivative works, including compilations and translations. If excerpts from other copyrighted works are included, the author(s) must obtain written permission from the copyright owners and credit the source(s) in the article. Elsevier has preprinted forms for use by authors in these cases.

For gold open access articles: Upon acceptance of an article, authors will be asked to complete a 'License Agreement' (more information). Permitted third party reuse of gold open access articles is determined by the author's choice of user license.

**Author rights**
As an author you (or your employer or institution) have certain rights to reuse your work. More information.

**Elsevier supports responsible sharing**
Find out how you can share your research published in Elsevier journals.

**Role of the funding source**
You are requested to identify who provided financial support for the conduct of the research and/or preparation of the article and to briefly describe the role of the sponsor(s), if any, in study design; in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data; in the writing of the report; and in the decision to submit the article for publication. If the funding source(s) had no such involvement then this should be stated.

**Open access**
Please visit our Open Access page for more information.

**Language (usage and editing services)**
Language should be standard UK English and woman-centred, e.g. use "childbearing woman" instead of "gravid patient", birth instead of delivery. Authors who feel their English language manuscript may require editing to eliminate possible grammatical or spelling errors and to conform to correct scientific English may wish to use the English Language Editing service (https://webshop.elsevier.com/language-editing-services/language-editing/) available from Elsevier's WebShop.
**Submission**

Our online submission system guides you stepwise through the process of entering your article details and uploading your files. The system converts your article files to a single PDF file used in the peer-review process. Editable files (e.g., Word, LaTeX) are required to typeset your article for final publication. All correspondence, including notification of the Editor's decision and requests for revision, is sent by e-mail.

**Categories of Decision**

After peer-review, the Editors will notify the corresponding author on whether the paper has been accepted, rejected, or needs revision. All efforts are made to provide fair and thorough reviews as speedily as possible. If an author(s) believes that a manuscript has been wrongly rejected, a detailed appeal letter that responds point-by-point to the reviewers' comments should be sent to the Editor, who, after having reviewed the referees' reports, will make the final decision.

Reviews by the Editors or Editorial Team will only include a Letter to the Editor or a short comment. For these types of submissions, the corresponding author will receive a fairly rapid decision on publication. Once a manuscript is accepted for publication, authors can expect web publication of the article in final version on ScienceDirect in 4 weeks.

**Submit your article**


**PREPARATION**

**Queries**

For questions about the editorial process (including the status of manuscripts under review) or for technical support on submissions, please visit our Support Center.

**Double-Blind Peer Review Process**

Editors review all abstracts and using a triage-type checklist will make a rapid decision about whether the article is suitable for peer review in this journal. The overall rejection rate is approximately 60% and the majority of these happen at the rapid decision stage. This rapid decision is of benefit for authors because the author can consider whether to submit elsewhere without undue delay.

The most common reasons for initial rejection are: 1) not having prior institutional ethical approval for research and/or not demonstrating fully informed and fully free consent by participants; 2) not meeting the scope of the journal sufficiently; 3) poor English and; 4) not following this guide for authors. The journal receives many more articles than it can submit hence the initial rejection rate is high. The Editorial Team have to always balance the number of submissions, the burden on our peer reviewers and the evolving priorities or areas of interest.

**Review Criteria**

Each paper that the editor/s assess as suitable for peer review is allocated to two reviewers who are asked to assess the paper.

Detailed Response to Reviewers. When submitting a revised manuscript, a Detailed Response to Reviewers must accompany the revision. This document must not contain any of the Author(s) details. The most common error is uploading this document on an organisation's letterhead, or the Author signing off with their name and contact details. The easiest way to format this document is to either (a) respond underneath each point raised by the reviewer, or (b) create a 2-column table and copy each point raised by the reviewer into the first column, and respond against each point in the second column. Highlight any changes made on the revised manuscript - to make it easy for the peer-reviewers to see where these have occurred. Also, remember to include only the page numbers to the manuscript as this makes the peer-review process easier. Please do not use line numbers in your file as line number are automated when the system builds the PDF.

**Peer review**

This journal operates a double anonymized review process. All contributions will be initially assessed by the editor for suitability for the journal. Papers deemed suitable are then typically sent to a minimum of two independent expert reviewers to assess the scientific quality of the paper. The Editor is responsible for the final decision regarding acceptance or rejection of articles. The Editor's decision is final. Editors are not involved in decisions about papers which they have written themselves or have been written by family members or colleagues or which relate to products or services in which the
editor has an interest. Any such submission is subject to all of the journal's usual procedures, with peer review handled independently of the relevant editor and their research groups. More information on types of peer review.

**Double anonymized review**

This journal uses double anonymized review, which means the identities of the authors are concealed from the reviewers, and vice versa. More information is available on our website. To facilitate this, please include the following separately:

**Title page (with author details):** This should include the title, authors' names, affiliations, acknowledgements and any Declaration of Interest statement, and a complete address for the corresponding author including an e-mail address.

**Anonymized manuscript (no author details):** The main body of the paper (including the references, figures, tables and any acknowledgements) should not include any identifying information, such as the authors' names or affiliations.

**Article structure**

Types of articles

- Research articles; quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods
- Reviews Articles (systematic reviews, meta-analyses, meta syntheses)
- Discussion or theoretical papers
- Editorials
- Letter to the Editor

Specific guidance on word count and number of references is provided in the next section.

Submissions that do not follow this guidance on word count or numbers of tables and figures may be returned without being reviewed. Supplementary material may be added without specific page limits.

The readability of the article, however, must not depend upon access to supplementary materials. Page numbers should be included for the convenience of the peer-reviewers. Please do not use line numbers in your file as line number are automated when the system builds the PDF. The text should be double or one and a half spaced with standard margins of 2.5 cm (1 inch) all around, and 11 or 12 point font size. Authors wishing to submit manuscripts with word counts, tables and figures in excess of the recommended number must seek permission of the Editor-in-Chief.

**Research articles.** For primary research articles, the maximum length up to 5000 words, 50 references, and 6 tables or figures. The word count refers to the main body of text, excluding the title page, abstract, references etc.

**Review articles (systematic reviews, meta-analyses, meta syntheses)** For review articles, the maximum length up to 5000 words, 100 references, and 6 tables or figures. The word count refers to the main body of text, excluding the title page, abstract, references etc. Discussion or theoretical papers

For discussion or theoretical articles, the maximum length up to 3500 words, 40 references, and 6 tables or figures. The word count refers to the main body of text, excluding the title page, abstract, references etc.

**Editorials.** For Editorials, the maximum length is up to 2500 words, 25 references and 2 tables or figures.

**Letters to the Editor** referring to a recent Midwifery article are encouraged up to 3 months after the appearance of a published paper. Text is limited to 350 words and 5 references. A single small table, figure, or image is permissible. Letters are not usually peer reviewed but may be subject to peer review at the editors' discretion. The Editor may invite replies from the authors of the original publication. By submitting a Letter to the Editor, the author gives permission for its publication in Midwifery. Letters should not duplicate material being published or submitted elsewhere. The editors reserve the right to edit and abridge letters and to publish responses.

**Submitting your paper**

Please have the following items ready before you log-on to the system. Every submission, regardless of category, must include the following: Cover letter Author Agreement Title page (with Author Details) Manuscript (without author details) Additional files that may be required depending on your manuscript Figures Tables Response to reviewers (if resubmission)

Checklist A Cover letter, stating: Conflict of Interest: when the proposed publication concerns any commercial product, either directly or indirectly, the author must include in the cover letter a statement (1) indicating that he or she has no financial or other interest in the product or distributor
of the product or (2) explaining the nature of any relation between himself or herself and the manufacturer or distributor of the product. Other kinds of associations, such as consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interests or patent licensing arrangements, also must be disclosed. If, in the Editor’s judgment, the information disclosed represents a potential conflict of interest, it may be made available to reviewers and may be published at the Editor’s discretion; authors will be informed of the decision before publication. Sources of outside support for research: including funding, equipment, and drugs.

An Author Agreement stating: o that the article is the author(s) original work o the article has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere o that all authors have seen and approved the manuscript being submitted o the author(s) abide by the copyright terms and conditions of Elsevier.

An Ethical Statement that includes: - The name of the ethics committee - The approval number - The date of approval o - Note: If the manuscript is based on a quality assurance or practice improvement project this must be made clear in the text of the paper and address ethical issues concerning informed and free consent and confidentiality, as relevant. If an Ethical Statement is not applicable this must also be specified.

Results
Results should be clear and concise.

Discussion
This should explore the significance of the results of the work, not repeat them. A combined Results and Discussion section is often appropriate. Avoid extensive citations and discussion of published literature.

ESSENTIAL_TITLE_PAGE_INFORMATION
Should contain:
Title. Short and descriptive of the content of the article (abbreviations must not be used in title).
Authors. List all authors by first name, all initials, family name and highest academic degree only using "RM, PhD" for holders of both qualifications. List the address of all institutions where the work was done. List departmental affiliations of each author with that institution after each institutional address. Connect authors to departments using numbered superscripts.
Corresponding Author. Provide the name, exact postal address with zip or postal code, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address of the author to whom communications, proofs, and requests for reprints should be sent.
Authors should include their Twitter handles on the Title Page if they have this. The complete manuscript, arranged as follows: (1) Structured Abstract and Keywords (2) manuscript, including Acknowledgments/Disclosures (see below) and References, (3) Tables (each complete with title) and 4) Figures. In addition, the following must be submitted if applicable: Written permission from the publisher (copyright holder) to reproduce any previously published table(s), illustration(s) or photograph(s) in both print and electronic media.

Abstract. The abstract must be structured and under 250 words. The structure of most abstracts should be: Problem Background Question, Hypothesis or Aim Methods Findings Discussion Conclusion The Abstract must not include references. Avoid abbreviations and acronyms. Ensure the name of the hospital or health service is not mentioned. If the abstract is reporting a clinical trial, the name of the trial register and the clinical trial registration number must be included in the abstract.
Keywords. Provide at least four and up to six keywords, at least three of which should be selected from those recommended by the Index Medicus Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) browser list (https://meshb.nlm.nih.gov/search)

Statement of Significance
In the introduction, create a table using the following headings to summaries (in 100 words or less) the contribution of your paper to the existing literature: Problem or Issue What is Already Known What this Paper Adds

Headings
Text should be organised as follows Introduction (including problem, theoretical and/or research background, hypothesis or guiding question, definitions of key terms) Participants, Ethics and Methods (described in detail). Findings or Results: for Quantitative research results should be concisely
reported in tables and figures, with brief text descriptions. For Qualitative research a balance must be struck between conciseness and sufficient data to support the discussion and conclusion. Discussion (clear and concise interpretation of results in the context of existing literature) Conclusion (summarise key points and make recommendations) Acknowledgments and Disclosures Abbreviations Minimise abbreviations to no more than four. Do not use abbreviations in the title. Use only abbreviations well known to midwives in the abstract. Define abbreviations at first appearance in the text. Measurements and weights should be given in standard metric units.

Acknowledgements
This section is compulsory. Grants, financial support and technical or other assistance are acknowledged at the end of the text before the references. All financial support for the project must be acknowledged. If there has been no financial assistance with the project, this must be clearly stated. The role(s) of the funding organisation, if any, in the collection of data, its analysis and interpretation, and in the right to approve or disapprove publication of the finished manuscript must be described in the Methods section of the text.

Footnotes
Footnotes are not used in the journal. Artwork Images or figures are submitted online as one or more separate files that may contain one or more images. Within each file containing images, use the figure number (e.g., Figure 1A) as the image filename. The system accepts image files formatted in TIFF and EPS. PowerPoint (.ppt) files are also accepted, but you must use a separate PowerPoint image file for each PowerPoint figure.

Formatting of funding sources
List funding sources in this standard way to facilitate compliance to funder's requirements:

Funding: This work was supported by the National Institutes of Health [grant numbers xxxx, yyyy]; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Seattle, WA [grant number zzzz]; and the United States Institutes of Peace [grant number aaaa].

It is not necessary to include detailed descriptions on the program or type of grants and awards. When funding is from a block grant or other resources available to a university, college, or other research institution, submit the name of the institute or organization that provided the funding.

If no funding has been provided for the research, it is recommended to include the following sentence:

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Artwork
Electronic artwork
General points
• Make sure you use uniform lettering and sizing of your original artwork.
• Embed the used fonts if the application provides that option.
• Aim to use the following fonts in your illustrations: Arial, Courier, Times New Roman, Symbol, or use fonts that look similar.
• Number the illustrations according to their sequence in the text.
• Use a logical naming convention for your artwork files.
• Provide captions to illustrations separately.
• Size the illustrations close to the desired dimensions of the published version.
• Submit each illustration as a separate file.
• Ensure that color images are accessible to all, including those with impaired color vision.

A detailed guide on electronic artwork is available.

You are urged to visit this site; some excerpts from the detailed information are given here.

Formats
If your electronic artwork is created in a Microsoft Office application (Word, PowerPoint, Excel) then please supply 'as is' in the native document format. Regardless of the application used other than Microsoft Office, when your electronic artwork is finalized, please 'Save as' or convert the images to one of the following formats (note the resolution requirements for line drawings, halftones, and line/halftone combinations given below):
EPS (or PDF): Vector drawings, embed all used fonts.
TIFF (or JPEG): Color or grayscale photographs (halftones), keep to a minimum of 300 dpi.
TIFF (or JPEG): Bitmapped (pure black & white pixels) line drawings, keep to a minimum of 1000 dpi.
TIFF (or JPEG): Combinations bitmapped line/half-tone (color or grayscale), keep to a minimum of 500 dpi.

Please do not:
• Supply files that are optimized for screen use (e.g., GIF, BMP, PICT, WPG); these typically have a low number of pixels and limited set of colors;
• Supply files that are too low in resolution;
• Submit graphics that are disproportionally large for the content.

Figure Legends
Figure legends should be numbered (Arabic) and double-spaced in order of appearance beginning on a separate sheet. Identify (in alphabetic order) all abbreviations appearing in the illustrations at the end of each legend. Give the type of stain and magnification power for all photomicrographs. All abbreviations used on a figure and in its legend should be defined in the legend. Cite the source of previously published (print or electronic) material in the legend. Symbols, letters, numbers and contrasting fills must be distinct, easily distinguished and clearly legible when the illustration is reduced in size. Black, white and widely crosshatched bars are preferable; do not use stippling, gray fill or thin lines.

Colour Artwork Figures/illustrations can be published in colour at no extra charge for the online version. For the print version, colour incurs a charge of EUR 200 for the first page and EUR 100 for every additional page containing colour. If you wish to have figures/illustrations in colour online and black and white figures printed, please submit both versions. If you wish to publish colour illustrations and agree to pay the “colour charge” check the appropriate box.

Tables
Please submit tables as editable text and not as images. Tables can be placed either next to the relevant text in the article, or on separate page(s) at the end. Number tables consecutively in accordance with their appearance in the text and place any table notes below the table body. Be sparing in the use of tables and ensure that the data presented in them do not duplicate results described elsewhere in the article. Please avoid using vertical rules and shading in table cells.

References
For Original Research Articles references should not be more than 40, except with specific permission from the editor prior to submission). The journal follows the International Council of Medical Journal Editors' (ICMJE's) Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals available at: http://www.icmje.org/recommendations

Referencing requirements for Midwifery are the same as for other major medical/health journal. Examples of citation and referencing for each type (e.g. article, book chapter, thesis) are at: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.htm. The full details of the National Library of Medicine (NLM) referencing requirements are found at http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK7256/ where the e-book can be accessed.

For users of bibliographic management systems like Mendelay or Endnote please use the most up to date version and select the Lancet Output Style because it complies with the ICMJE referencing standards.

Citation in Text
Please ensure that every reference cited in the text is also present in the reference list (and vice versa). Any references cited in the abstract must be given in full. Unpublished results and personal communications are not permitted. Citations of a reference as 'in press' implies that the item has been accepted for publication.

The accuracy of the references is the responsibility of the author.

Text:
All citations in the text should refer to:
1. Single author: the author's name (without initials, unless there is ambiguity) and the year of publication;
2. Two authors: both authors' names and the year of publication;
Three or more authors: first author's name followed by 'et al.' and the year of publication. Citations may be made directly (or parenthetically). Groups of references should be listed first chronologically, then alphabetically.

Examples: "as demonstrated (Allan, 1996a, 1996b, 1999; Allan and Jones, 1995). Kramer et al. (2000) have recently shown "

Reference list: References should be arranged first alphabetically and then further sorted chronologically if necessary. More than one reference from the same author(s) in the same year must be identified by the letters "a", "b", "c", etc., placed after the year of publication. Full journal titles must be used in the reference list.

Examples:

Reference to a journal publication:


References to a book:


Reference to a chapter in an edited book:


Citing and listing of Web references. As a minimum, the full URL should be given. Any further information, if known (Author names, dates, reference to a source publication, etc.), should also be given. Web references can be listed separately (e.g., after the reference list) under a different heading if desired, or can be included in the reference list.

Data references
This journal encourages you to cite underlying or relevant datasets in your manuscript by citing them in your text and including a data reference in your Reference List. Data references should include the following elements: author name(s), dataset title, data repository, version (where available), year, and global persistent identifier. Add [dataset] immediately before the reference so we can properly identify it as a data reference. The [dataset] identifier will not appear in your published article.

Preprint references
Where a preprint has subsequently become available as a peer-reviewed publication, the formal publication should be used as the reference. If there are preprints that are central to your work or that cover crucial developments in the topic, but are not yet formally published, these may be referenced. Preprints should be clearly marked as such, for example by including the word preprint, or the name of the preprint server, as part of the reference. The preprint DOI should also be provided.

Reference management software
Most Elsevier journals have their reference template available in many of the most popular reference management software products. These include all products that support Citation Style Language styles, such as Mendeley. Using citation plug-ins from these products, authors only need to select the appropriate journal template when preparing their article, after which citations and bibliographies will be automatically formatted in the journal's style. If no template is yet available for this journal, please follow the format of the sample references and citations as shown in this Guide. If you use reference management software, please ensure that you remove all field codes before submitting the electronic manuscript. More information on how to remove field codes from different reference management software.
Data visualization
Include interactive data visualizations in your publication and let your readers interact and engage more closely with your research. Follow the instructions here to find out about available data visualization options and how to include them with your article.

Supplementary Data
Supplementary material such as applications, images and sound clips, can be published with your article to enhance it. Submitted supplementary items are published exactly as they are received (Excel or PowerPoint files will appear as such online). Please submit your material together with the article and supply a concise, descriptive caption for each supplementary file. If you wish to make changes to supplementary material during any stage of the process, please make sure to provide an updated file. Do not annotate any corrections on a previous version. Please switch off the 'Track Changes' option in Microsoft Office files as these will appear in the published version.

Research data
This journal encourages and enables you to share data that supports your research publication where appropriate, and enables you to interlink the data with your published articles. Research data refers to the results of observations or experimentation that validate research findings, which may also include software, code, models, algorithms, protocols, methods and other useful materials related to the project.

Below are a number of ways in which you can associate data with your article or make a statement about the availability of your data when submitting your manuscript. If you are sharing data in one of these ways, you are encouraged to cite the data in your manuscript and reference list. Please refer to the "References" section for more information about data citation. For more information on depositing, sharing and using research data and other relevant research materials, visit the research data page.

Data linking
If you have made your research data available in a data repository, you can link your article directly to the dataset. Elsevier collaborates with a number of repositories to link articles on ScienceDirect with relevant repositories, giving readers access to underlying data that gives them a better understanding of the research described.

There are different ways to link your datasets to your article. When available, you can directly link your dataset to your article by providing the relevant information in the submission system. For more information, visit the database linking page.

For supported data repositories a repository banner will automatically appear next to your published article on ScienceDirect.

In addition, you can link to relevant data or entities through identifiers within the text of your manuscript, using the following format: Database: xxxx (e.g., TAIR: AT1G01020; CCDC: 734053; PDB: 1XFN).

Research Elements
This journal enables you to publish research objects related to your original research – such as data, methods, protocols, software and hardware – as an additional paper in a Research Elements journal.

Research Elements is a suite of peer-reviewed, open access journals which make your research objects findable, accessible and reusable. Articles place research objects into context by providing detailed descriptions of objects and their application, and linking to the associated original research articles. Research Elements articles can be prepared by you, or by one of your collaborators.

During submission, you will be alerted to the opportunity to prepare and submit a manuscript to one of the Research Elements journals.

More information can be found on the Research Elements page.
Data statement
To foster transparency, we encourage you to state the availability of your data in your submission. This may be a requirement of your funding body or institution. If your data is unavailable to access or unsuitable to post, you will have the opportunity to indicate why during the submission process, for example by stating that the research data is confidential. The statement will appear with your published article on ScienceDirect. For more information, visit the Data Statement page.

AFTER ACCEPTANCE

Online proof correction
To ensure a fast publication process of the article, we kindly ask authors to provide us with their proof corrections within two days. Corresponding authors will receive an e-mail with a link to our online proofing system, allowing annotation and correction of proofs online. The environment is similar to MS Word: in addition to editing text, you can also comment on figures/tables and answer questions from the Copy Editor. Web-based proofing provides a faster and less error-prone process by allowing you to directly type your corrections, eliminating the potential introduction of errors. If preferred, you can still choose to annotate and upload your edits on the PDF version. All instructions for proofing will be given in the e-mail we send to authors, including alternative methods to the online version and PDF.
We will do everything possible to get your article published quickly and accurately. Please use this proof only for checking the typesetting, editing, completeness and correctness of the text, tables and figures. Significant changes to the article as accepted for publication will only be considered at this stage with permission from the Editor. It is important to ensure that all corrections are sent back to us in one communication. Please check carefully before replying, as inclusion of any subsequent corrections cannot be guaranteed. Proofreading is solely your responsibility.

Language Editing
Authors who require information about language editing and copyediting services pre- and post-submission please visit: https://webshop.elsevier.com/language-editing-services/language-editing/ or visit our Support Center for more information. Please note Elsevier neither endorses nor takes responsibility for any products, goods or services offered by outside vendors through our services or in any advertising. For more information please refer to our Terms & Conditions https://www.elsevier.com/legal/elsevier-website-terms-and-conditions

Considerations specific to types of research designs
The editors require that manuscripts adhere to recognized reporting guidelines relevant to the research design used. These identify matters that should be addressed in your paper. These are not quality assessment frameworks and your study need not meet all the criteria implied in the reporting guideline to be worthy of publication in the journal. The checklists do identify essential matters that should be considered and reported upon.

Any paper reporting the results of a questionnaire survey should include a copy of the questionnaire used, together with the manuscript. This should be uploaded as Supplemental Information.

You are encouraged (although not required) to submit a checklist from the appropriate reporting guideline together with your paper as a guide to the editors and reviewers of your paper.

Reporting guidelines endorsed by the journal are listed on the EQUATOR website at http://www.equator-network.org/

Offprints
The corresponding author will, at no cost, receive a customized Share Link providing 50 days free access to the final published version of the article on ScienceDirect. The Share Link can be used for sharing the article via any communication channel, including email and social media. For an extra charge, paper offprints can be ordered via the offprint order form which is sent once the article is accepted for publication. Corresponding authors who have published their article gold open access do not receive a Share Link as their final published version of the article is available open access on ScienceDirect and can be shared through the article DOI link.

AUTHOR INQUIRIES
Visit the Elsevier Support Center to find the answers you need. Here you will find everything from Frequently Asked Questions to ways to get in touch.
You can also check the status of your submitted article or find out when your accepted article will be published.

© Copyright 2018 Elsevier | https://www.elsevier.com