DESCRIPTION

*Women and Birth* is the official journal of the Australian College of Midwives (ACM). It is a midwifery journal that publishes on all matters that affect women and birth, from pre-conceptual counselling, through pregnancy, birth, and the first six weeks postnatal. All papers accepted will draw from and contribute to the relevant contemporary research, policy and/or theoretical literature. We seek research papers, discussion papers, and systematic reviews.

Our woman-centred focus is inclusive of the family, fetus and newborn, both well and sick, and covers both healthy and complex pregnancies and births. The journal seeks papers that take a woman-centred focus on maternity services, epidemiology, primary health care, reproductive psycho/physiology, midwifery practice, theory, research, education, management and leadership. We also seek relevant papers on maternal mental health and neonatal well-being, natural and complementary therapies, local, national and international policy, management, politics, economics and societal and cultural issues as they affect childbearing women and their families. Topics may include, where appropriate, neonatal care, child and family health, women's health, related to pregnancy, birth and the postpartum, including lactation. Interprofessional papers relevant to midwifery are welcome. Articles are double blind peer-reviewed, primarily by experts in the field of the submitted work.

The journal is indexed in PubMed, MEDLINE, Thomson Reuters, Scopus and CINAHL.

The journal is available online to ACM members and is available by separate subscription.

**Open Access** - the journal offers authors the option of making their article freely available to all via the ScienceDirect platform. Authors can only make this choice after receiving notification that their article has been accepted for publication.

**ClinicalKey Nursing**
Visit our nursing resource, [ClinicalKey Nursing](https://www.clinicalkey.com/nursing)

To purchase books on Midwifery or to browse our comprehensive range of Midwifery titles, please visit us at [www.elsevierhealth.com.au/midwifery](http://www.elsevierhealth.com.au/midwifery).

**IMPACT FACTOR**

2019: 2.308 © Clarivate Analytics Journal Citation Reports 2020
EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-Chief
Caroline SE Homer AO, Burnet Institute, Melbourne, Australia

Deputy Editor
Linda Sweet, Western Health - Deakin University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Associate Editors
Jyai Allen, Griffith University School of Nursing and Midwifery - Nathan Campus, Nathan, Queensland, Australia
Susan Crowther, Robert Gordon University Faculty of Health and Social Care, Aberdeen, United Kingdom
Allison Cummins, University of Technology Sydney Faculty of Health, Sydney, Australia
Hannah Dahlén, AM, Western Sydney University School of Nursing and Midwifery Hawkesbury Campus, Richmond, New South Wales, Australia
Deborah Davis, University of Canberra Discipline of Midwifery, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia
Juan Miguel Martinez Galiano, University of Jaen, Jaen, Spain
Andrea Gilkison, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand
Yvonne Hauck, Curtin University School of Nursing and Midwifery, Perth, Western Australia, Australia
Kate Levett, The University of Notre Dame Australia - Sydney Campus Broadway, Sydney, Australia
Karen Matvienko-Sikar, University College Cork School of Public Health, Cork, Ireland
Lois McKellar, University of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia
Gayle McLelland, Southern Cross University, Lismore, New South Wales, Australia
Shahla Meedya, University of Wollongong Faculty of Science Medicine and Health, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia
Maeve O’Connell, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and Medical University of Bahrain, Adliya, Bahrain
Jenny Parratt, Southern Cross University Discipline of Midwifery, Lismore, New South Wales, Australia
Claudia Ravaldi, CliaLapo Charity, Tuscany, Prato, Italy
Miguel Richard-Martinez, University of Alicante, Alicante, Spain
Susan Way, Bournemouth University Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Bournemouth, United Kingdom
Moira Williamson, Central Queensland University School of Nursing and Midwifery, Noosaville, Queensland, Australia

Emeritus Editor-in-Chief
Kathleen Fahy, University of Queensland School of Nursing Midwifery and Social Work, Brisbane, 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.

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
• Author’s may include their Twitter handles on the Title Page if they wish to.

All necessary files are ready to be uploaded:
Please have the following items ready before you log-on to the system. Every submission, regardless of category, must include the following four items:
• Cover letter
• Author Agreement
• Title page (with Author Details)
• Manuscript (without author details)

Additional files that may be required depending on your manuscript:
• All figures (include relevant captions)
• All tables (including titles, description, footnotes)
• Response to reviewers (if resubmission)
• Research approach Checklist
• Graphical Abstracts and Highlights files (where applicable)
• Supplemental files (where applicable)

Further considerations
• Manuscript has been 'spell checked' and 'grammar checked'
• All references mentioned in the Reference List are cited in the text, and vice versa
• Permission has been obtained for use of copyrighted material from other sources (including the Internet)
• A competing interests statement is provided, even if the authors have no competing interests to declare
• Journal policies detailed in this guide have been reviewed
• Please include the details under the headings "Acknowledgement", "Conflict of interest", "Ethical Statement", "Funding" and "Author Contributions" in a separate file and then select the file type as "Author agreement" and upload it to EM during the submission process

For further information, visit our Support Center.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before you start we also suggest you look at the style of language and terminology used in the journal. This Editorial provides some information.
https://www.womenandbirth.org/article/S1871-5192(20)30088-3/fulltext

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. Please upload the appropriate and completed Reporting Guideline Checklist during your manuscript submission process.

**Observational cohort, case control and cross sectional studies** - STROBE - Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology [STROBE Checklist](http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/strobe/)


Reporting the range of methods used to improve healthcare - SQUIRE - Standards for Quality Improvement Reporting Excellence [SQUIRE Checklist](http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/square-checklist)

Qualitative researchers are encouraged to consult the guideline listed below:

**Qualitative research** - SRQR - Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research: A Synthesis of Recommendations [SRQR Checklist](http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/square-checklist)

**Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT)** [MMAT](http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/mma-tool)

**Human and animal rights**

Ethics in Research – Note that research studies that do not have ethical approval prior to being conducted will not normally be published. We will consider publication, however, 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](http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines)


For research involving humans, 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.

The guidelines for the humane treatment of ANIMALS in research are found here: https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-ethics/animal-research-ethics

Ethics in Publication
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').

Women and Birth 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.

Author contributions
For transparency, we encourage authors to submit an author statement file outlining their individual contributions to the paper using the relevant CRediT roles: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Funding acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Roles/Writing - original draft; Writing - review & editing. Authorship statements should be formatted with the names of authors first and CRediT role(s) following. 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 which have also been adopted by the Australian NHMRC Guidelines for the Responsible Conduct of Research available at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/r39, 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. No author should be added who does not meet the first requirement; for more details please read “How to handle authorship disputes: a guide for new researchers” (2003) by Tim Albert and Liz Wage available at the COPE website: http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines. 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.
Contributors
Those who meet some, but not all of the criteria for authors should be identified as 'contributors' at the end of the manuscript 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 does not meet criteria for authorship should be acknowledged in the paper.

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-in-Chief. To request such a change, the Editor-in-Chief 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-in-Chief consider the addition, deletion or rearrangement of authors after the manuscript has been accepted. While the Editor-in-Chief 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.

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 or as part of a published lecture or academic thesis or as an electronic preprint, see https://www.elsevier.com/sharingpolicy), 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, 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 originality, your article may be checked by the originality detection service CrossCheck https://www.elsevier.com/editors/plagdetect.

Copyright
Papers accepted for publication become the copyright of the Australian College of Midwives, and authors will be asked to sign a transfer of copyright form, on receipt of the accepted manuscript by Elsevier. This enables the Publisher to administer Copyright on behalf of the Authors and the College, whilst allowing the continued use of the material by the Author for Scholarly communication.

Author rights
As an author you (or your employer or institution) have certain rights to reuse your work. For more information see https://www.elsevier.com/copyright. You may publish a pre-publication version (i.e. a version that is not in its final finished form) on social media including sites such as Mendeley, ResearchGate and Academia.

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

Conflict of Interest
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/conflictsofinterest. Further information and an example of a Conflict of Interest form can be found at: https://service.elsevier.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/286/supporthub/publishing.

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.
**Funding Body Agreements and Policies**
Elsevier has established a number of agreements with funding bodies which allow authors to comply with their funder's open access policies. Some authors may also be reimbursed for associated publication fees. To learn more about existing agreements please visit [https://www.elsevier.com/fundingbodies](https://www.elsevier.com/fundingbodies)

After acceptance, open access papers will be published under a noncommercial license. For authors requiring a commercial Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license, you can apply after your manuscript is accepted for publication.

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

**Open access**
This journal offers you the option of making your article freely available to all via the ScienceDirect platform. To prevent any conflict of interest, you can only make this choice after receiving notification that your article has been accepted for publication. The fee of US$ 1,700 excludes taxes and other potential author fees such as colour charges. In some cases, institutions and funding bodies have entered into agreement with Elsevier to meet these fees on behalf of their authors. Details of these agreements are available at [https://www.elsevier.com/fundingbodies](https://www.elsevier.com/fundingbodies). Whatever access option you choose, you retain many rights as an author, including the right to post a revised personal version of your article on your own website. More information can be found here: [https://www.elsevier.com/authorsrights](https://www.elsevier.com/authorsrights).

Learn more about Elsevier's pricing policy: [https://www.elsevier.com/openaccesspricing](https://www.elsevier.com/openaccesspricing)

**Elsevier Researcher Academy**
**Researcher Academy** is a free e-learning platform designed to support early and mid-career researchers throughout their research journey. The "Learn" environment at Researcher Academy offers several interactive modules, webinars, downloadable guides and resources to guide you through the process of writing for research and going through peer review. Feel free to use these free resources to improve your submission and navigate the publication process with ease.

**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.

**Submit your article**

**Categories of Decision**
After peer-review, the Editor-in-Chief 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.

Reviewed by Editor-in-Chief 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.

**PREPARATION**
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 against one of the Journal’s three sets of reviewing criteria i.e. 1) Quantitative Research; 2) Qualitative Research; 3) Scholarly Paper Review Criteria.

View the Review criteria here.

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 blind 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. More information on types of peer review.

Double-blind review
This journal uses double-blind 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.
Blinded 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 and qualitative
- Systematic Reviews; quantitative and qualitative
- Theoretical papers
- Discussion papers
For standard articles, the maximum length is now 35 double-spaced pages, with standard margins of 2.5 cm (1 inch) all around, and 11 point font size. This page allowance is inclusive of all Tables, Figures, and References, but excluding the Structured Abstract.

Any author who has a very good reason to increase the page number beyond 35, e.g. a qualitative research paper, will need to make a clear case to the Editor-in-Chief. Please email the Editor for approval, including the Structured Abstract, prior to submitting. (Email: caroline.homer@burnet.edu.au).

Tables must not exceed six typeset pages.

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.

Language should be standard UK English and woman-centred, e.g. use "childbearing woman" instead of "gravid patient", “birth” instead of “delivery”.

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:
- that the article is the author(s) original work
- the article has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere
- that all authors have seen and approved the manuscript being submitted
- the author(s) abide by the copyright terms and conditions of Elsevier and the Australian College of Midwives

An Ethical Statement that includes:
- The name of the ethics committee
- The approval number
- The date of approval
• 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.

**A Title Page**

**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.

**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

**Example of Statement of Significance**

**Problem**
Poor assessment and clinical reasoning are major contributors to adverse birth outcomes.

**What is Already Known**
Midwifery decision-making during birth is mediated by hierarchies of surveillance and control. Midwives are often unable to implement their preferred decision. The international and national professional decision-making frameworks are not sufficiently detailed to guide midwives’ clinical reasoning.
What this Paper Adds
Evidence that half of the midwives interviewed did not use clinical reasoning to make decisions. A new and detailed model of midwifery clinical reasoning which incorporates a role for intuition.

Headings
For Original Research Articles references should not be more than 40, except with specific permission from the editor prior to submission), 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 (eg, 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.

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.

**Color 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 US$ 312 for the first page and US$ 208 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 must not exceed six typeset pages.
Tables should be double-spaced on separate sheets (one to each page).

Do not use vertical lines. Each table should be numbered (Arabic) and have a title above.

Legends and explanatory notes should be placed below the table.

Abbreviations used in the table follow the legend in alphabetic order.

Lower case letter superscripts beginning with "a" and following in alphabetic order are used for notations of within-group and between-group statistical probabilities.

Tables should be self-explanatory, and the data should not be duplicated in the text or illustrations. Tables must be submitted as part of the text file and not as illustrations.

**References**
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 *Women and Birth* 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.html.

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 recommended in the reference list, but may be mentioned in the text. If these references are included in the reference list they should follow the standard reference style of the journal and should include a substitution of the publication date with either 'Unpublished results' or 'Personal communication'. Citation of a reference as 'in press' implies that the item has been accepted for publication.

**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.

**Supplementary material**
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. To facilitate reproducibility and data reuse, this journal also encourages you to share your 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).

**Mendeley Data**

This journal supports Mendeley Data, enabling you to deposit any research data (including raw and processed data, video, code, software, algorithms, protocols, and methods) associated with your manuscript in a free-to-use, open access repository. During the submission process, after uploading your manuscript, you will have the opportunity to upload your relevant datasets directly to Mendeley Data. The datasets will be listed and directly accessible to readers next to your published article online.

For more information, visit the Mendeley Data for journals 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/tabs 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.

**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. Both corresponding and co-authors may order offprints at any time via Elsevier’s Author Services. 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.