

Description

A Missing Piece

d @ABurnett_StMW on Twitter.



One day, whilst exploring YouTube, I saw a video about a day in the life of a midwife. As I was watching, I realised that this is exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to become a midwife. I went to a nursing school to study anatomy, physiology and basic nursing skills, and before I knew it, I was accepted onto a midwifery course and was ready to start my first year! This blog entry details how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting me as a second-year midwifery student in Greece.

Lockdown



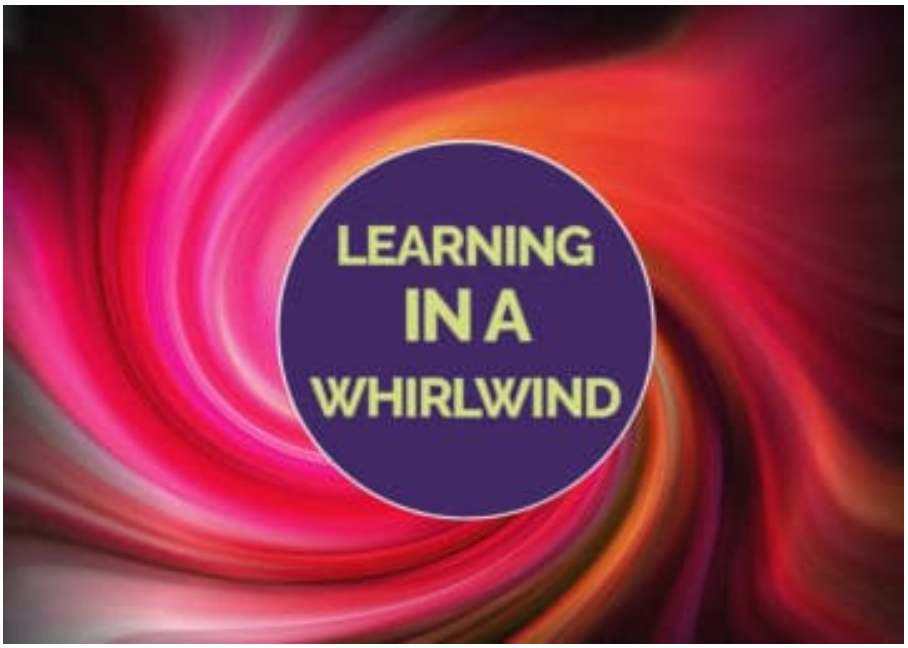
When the COVID-19 pandemic first emerged here in Greece, it did not receive much attention as worsening relations with a neighbouring country commanded much of the Greek population's attention. However, following the first 3 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Greece, our prime minister decided to lock down the entire country. Shops, schools, universities and almost everything apart from healthcare units, hospitals, supermarkets and pharmacies were shut down. We are only allowed to leave our homes if we carry our identity cards and a self-signed declaration of where we are going. It was thought that this situation would last for around 2 weeks, little did we know that that was not to be the case! I study far away from home and can only see my family on special holidays such as Christmas, Easter or summer vacations. So, to be honest, when I heard that universities would remain closed for two weeks I thought, "okay, I'll have some quality time to spend with my family and receive some home-cooked meals from my mum. This won't be that bad after all!" But after the first two weeks passed, the quarantine was extended and we had to start online classes. We couldn't start them any earlier because my university and professors had to deal with many technical problems. As a result of that, we participated in online classes during the Easter holiday, which despite being unusual, did not matter very much because all churches are closed.

Silver linings



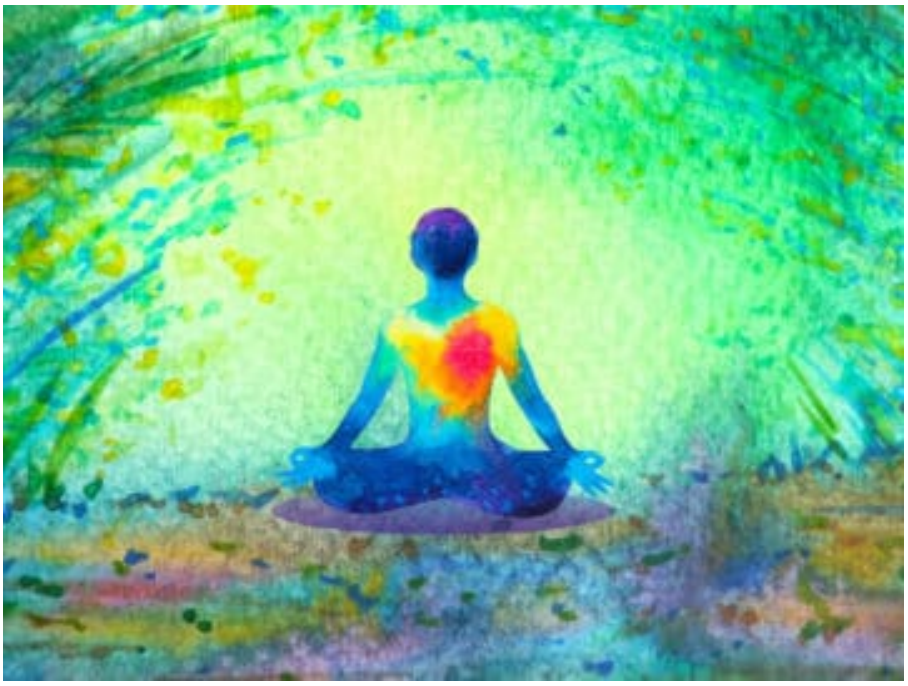
Interestingly, some positive things have come out of this situation too. Firstly, books for this semester will be delivered to our homes. Personally, I find this very cool since we no longer have to wait for books in very large queues or carry them home ourselves – those books are seriously heavy! Secondly, as a result of my boredom, I study a lot more than I ever did before. I have so much free time and what better way to spend it than to study? I am trying to keep up with everything related to midwifery and I am particularly happy to have found The Student Midwife journal. In Greece, most magazines ceased publication in 2010, due to the economic crisis. So as you can imagine, a journal about midwifery in Greece could be considered a luxury. There are only three universities that have midwifery departments in Greece, so there are not many midwives, I don't complain of course because I know this just makes us special!

A missing piece



The main problem we are facing as students is the inability to practice in the hospitals we were allocated to for the semester. We also cannot attend the labs or simulation centres where we learn and practise clinical skills. It is very hard to learn clinical skills via the internet and it also feels almost impossible to practise these new skills, or the ones we already have. Whilst we learn the new skills our professors are teaching us, we cannot have face-to-face supervision and the consequent benefit of having someone see if we are performing them correctly. I feel like a piece of myself is missing. I really miss being able to attend labs, so much so that my dad jokingly asked me if I wanted to perform venepuncture on him so that I could practise (of course he wasn't serious and we both laughed about it afterwards!).
There has been speculation that universities will re-open again in September. That means no more hospital placements or labs for the rest of this semester. By participating in labs and undertaking clinical placements we gain skills and experience, we are exposed to different clinical settings and scenarios and develop a better understanding of why we provide the midwifery care that we do. I also believe that these experiences are what teach midwives and nurses to give high-quality care to women. I truly believe that practical experience empowers students and helps them to become more confident because doing things repeatedly develops confidence in your skill and proficiency. An ancient Greek philosopher once said: "Repetition is the mother of knowledge" and I think we can all agree with that!

Safety and positivity



Education is a basic right and due to this pandemic I feel like this right is being eroded. I know that the internet provides solutions to not being able to access libraries and textbooks, but I feel that traditional learning materials are the best. On the other hand, I also feel like talking about my education while students all over the world are suffering the exact same challenges is selfish. In these difficult times, all we can do is be patient. Even though I am concerned that some of my country's emergency regulations are quite strict, they are probably the best way to protect ourselves, our families and everyone around us. My advice to you would be not to give up doing what you love, study harder than ever, now that you have the time to do so, practise with whatever resources you have and keep yourselves safe. You must possess two things to get through hard times: safety and positivity. I hope you have them both.

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Date Created
26th April 2020