

Description

The Year the World Stood Still

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The year of the Nurse and the Midwife

Not only is 2020 the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, but it is also the year that I will finally qualify as a midwife! The year that of all of my hard work leading up to this will finally pay off! The year that all of my blood, sweat

and tears, and the time that I have spent away from my children, husband and family will finally be worth it! This degree has not always been easy — I have questioned my ability so many times, and there have been times when my confidence has been in my boots. However, September 2020 was now *so* close and I was excited and ready for the last stretch!

The world stood still



Then, the world stood still. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic on the 11th March 2020. And on the 23rd of March 2020, the UK government declared that people must stay in their homes for an unspecified amount of time as part of a nationwide lockdown! Overnight I was not only studying for a degree, but I now had the daunting task of home-schooling my two children, and my husband's workplace had to figure out how they were going to keep their business running. I had to stop seeing the women on my caseload and clinical practice was cancelled until after the Easter break for some, and indefinitely for others. It was a scary, nerve-racking and unbelievable time.

Family and friends

I was scared for my family and friends. Especially my mother, who has breast cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy. My world seemed to crumble around me when she was recently admitted to hospital and diagnosed with COVID-19, but thankfully she has made a full recovery. Daily life has changed so much and not being able to see my family is gut-wrenching, but we are trying our best to keep spirits up with regular video chats!

So many questions



I have been preparing and writing my dissertation and another essay since mid-January. Having been out of practice for two months, I had no idea what impact this virus was having on clinical areas and the midwives and women within them. As a cohort we had so many questions, in particular, we wondered how the pandemic was going to affect the remaining months of our training. Although guidance came from the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), we struggled to work out amongst ourselves how the rest of our training would be affected. Our university sent us updates every other day because the situation changed so frequently, and our lecturers were working hard to navigate all of the information they were receiving almost daily. Once the new emergency NMC guidance became available we had a group video chat with our midwifery lecturers, who explained the next steps and what our options were. After hearing all of our options there was absolutely no question that I was going to opt-in. I wanted to help where I could. I am nervous and excited about joining the midwifery workforce. I am nervous because I am unsure about how things have changed in practice, and I am excited about getting back to helping amazing midwives and doing what I love—helping women!

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Working towards my goals

The biggest question I have now is “When will I qualify?”. In order to qualify for entry onto the NMC register, I have to achieve a number of competencies, comply with European Union (EU) requirements for midwifery education, complete the required clinical hours and pass my final theory and practice assessments. I am very lucky to be close to achieving these goals, but there are a few in my cohort that are not as fortunate. At this moment in time, there are a number of questions that no one is able to answer. Since we will no longer be supernumerary in practice how will we get all of our work done? What will be our scope of practice whilst on placement? What impact will this pandemic have on third-year students’ job prospects if we do not know when we will qualify? These unanswered questions make me anxious because I want to be helpful to the midwives I work with. We do not know how long this virus will disrupt our everyday

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Hope and support



I know that my university and practice area will support us to the best of their ability, and our lecturers have arranged another video meeting prior to us going into practice. One benefit of undertaking the extended clinical placement so close to the end of my training is that the transition from being a student to being a qualified midwife might be a little less daunting. All we can do is hope that this pandemic is over soon.

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