Description

International Midwifery Opportunities and Challenges

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Midwifery is an international profession and many midwives make the decision to move away from the UK to live and work. I was one of them. I loved my job as an NHS midwife, I valued my professional autonomy, training and the expansive knowledge and wisdom of the birth workers surrounding me. However, I wanted to fulfil my life personally. In 2013, whilst avoiding 'adulthood', I moved to Australia. My international midwifery journey started in private obstetric practice. It was bumpy. The practice didn't align with my midwifery ethos. I had a passion for home and physiological birth – quite the juxtaposition against a heavily obstetric system I found myself in. It's not all bad though, in fact it was this experience that helped me conceive my business – Aulive. I was determined to support midwives to experience a new lifestyle and still work within an organisation that supported their career and development goals. I knew that one day I was going to offer healthcare professionals the opportunity to work in Australia, in a positive, wholesome way. Since then, I have been placing healthcare professionals across Australia. I've had the pleasure of mentoring Lucy Gladwell, an Australian midwifery leader. This is an excerpt from our conversation which might shed light on what international midwifery can look like and the experience of relocating to Australia.

Hi Lucy, what made you move to Australia?

The UK weather was terrible, I found myself wishing time away before my next holiday. I loved being an NHS midwife, but the shifts were long with huge workloads, minimal breaks and immense pressure. I felt overwhelmed about the thought of working in these conditions for 40+ years. I needed a break. In Australia my qualification was recognised, there was better weather, pay and opportunities.

How did Aulive help you on your journey?

Olivia is my mentor. Over the years, she has advised me using her wealth of knowledge and network connections. She has an in-depth understanding of Melbourne and Sydney and their public/private midwifery practices. Olivia has guided me through many career growth opportunities, helping me navigating new roles and new hospital systems. Having strong midwifery leaders to turn to for advice and support has been invaluable. Olivia has had a diverse and impressive midwifery career and has been a great soundboard as I've navigated my career path.

What is the professional culture like?

It's more relaxed and the staff are very welcoming. There's no set uniform, midwives wear vibrant coloured scrubs, including Christmas themed ones in December! There's flexibility with work arrangements with a focus on wellbeing, retention and job satisfaction.

How has your hospital supported your career growth?

Study leave to achieve my Master's was paid for. I have been on secondment for the past year completing a clinical fellowship program which builds capability in improvement, project management and leadership.

Are you happier as a midwife now?

There is a good work/life culture, with an understanding that health and family come first. Part-time working is sustainable as the wages are higher. You get financially compensated for missed breaks, so there is more of a motive to ensure you get them. Overtime is well compensated and the unions are strong. There are clear guidelines regarding midwives entitlement and patient ratios – one midwife to four pregnant people on a day shift and six on a night shift.

What's life like for you outside of midwifery?

I go camping to incredible and affordable campsites. I love how you can see many different landscapes within an hour of the city, from beaches and wineries to rainforests and mountains. Even on these short breaks, it feels like I am away on holiday! **TSM**

To read the full interview visit: www.all4maternity.com/news-views/the-greatmigration-journey-of-two-uk-midwives-seeking-newopportunities-and-challenges-in-australia

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