

Description

The Cascade of Mentorship in Midwifery Practice

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I have come to the end of my first rotation in practice as a new graduate midwife. My first rotation was in birth unit for four months. Wow, what an incredible ride! I loved it! This is a follow up to my blog post 'Be brave be kind'. In my 'be brave and be kind'. I want all midwives



Around 5,500 women a year will birth at the tertiary birth unit where I am fortunate to work as a midwife. We support women and their families from the local area, as well as those from throughout New South Wales who are referred due to their complex pregnancy needs. It can be daunting to begin practice in birth unit.

My deep-rooted passion for woman-centred care is at the forefront of the midwife I am. Human rights in childbirth are engrained within me. I am not shy about who I am and wear my heart on my sleeve. Advocating for women and their families is at the centre of why I am a midwife.

> But, I felt anxious about how I would be perceived by colleagues as a new graduate midwife. Would I be supported to advocate for women? Is passion an important component of woman-centred care in a tertiary birth unit?

To be truly honest, I worried about whether I would be supported to be able to **trust normal birth** in a tertiary hospital with high intervention rates.

It is reasonable to say that in my four-month rotation, most women I supported had continuous CTG monitoring and/or were having an induction of labour (IOL). Reasons varied from maternal cardiac condition to gestational diabetes to fetal anomalies. Pulling together the full clinical picture for the mother and baby requires a lot of skill and expertise. My brain was in overdrive! As a new graduate midwife, it is so easy to become wrapped up in learning time management, maintaining good documentation, not getting air bubbles in IV pumps, setting up for epidurals, etc. that sometimes actually being 'with woman' is a challenge.

I am so thankful to every woman that I supported. At every interaction, I was reminded of the true privilege of being a midwife. Watching and listening to the women we care for is one of the most important skills a midwife can possess.

I experienced many oxytocin highs after witnessing births. I was truly spoilt. I witnessed and was the primary midwife for some incredible normal births along with many births with intervention. The following day I would visit the woman to hear how she felt about her birth. The joy and honour of hearing a woman thank you personally as the midwife supporting her is better than I ever could have expected! The woman didn't always have the birth she wanted or expected but being able to support her and debrief with her was an integral part of my practice.

Positive mentorship

Through reflection, I have concluded that my mentors played a key role in supporting me to be the midwife I want to be, and thankfully feel I am. Whilst I held space for the women I cared for, they held space for me. They were there to debrief with me, help answer questions, challenge my skills and step in to support me during emergencies. Sometimes they even stepped in to help me finish the endless paperwork!

> According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a mentor is an experienced and trusted advisor.

I like to be reminded of this! Trust is so important.

I then went on a tangent to read about mentorship in nursing and midwifery. A recent literature review about mentorship in nursing sums things up perfectly, and really resonated with me. The authors found that many studies have shown that mentors benefit from partnership with their mentee through;[1]

- increased personal fulfillment
- career success and satisfaction
- increased creativity
- and learning and development of leadership skills.

Mentees can experience:

- increased socialisation and acceptance within the organisation
- decreased stress
- increased confidence and competence
- and assistance with career planning and psychosocial support.

In conclusion, I am very thankful to my mentors. I am a talker so it is vital I can talk through my learning! It has been important to me to have those that I trust to remind me to 'stop' and just trust myself in staying in the moment and growing as a midwife.

References

1. Rohatinsky, N., Harding, K. & Carriere, T.*Nursing student peer mentorship: a review of the literature.*Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 2017. **25**(1), 61-77, DOI: 10.1080/13611267.2017.1308098

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