

## EDITORIAL

Today you are receiving something different. Yes this is your newsletter. We have been working hard on the change and therefore, here it is!

So, in this issue we shall bring you good and exciting news; reference points; internet sites; latest news of what's happening in the midwifery world and much, much more. This is the last issue for the year 2003 however, the people behind this newsletter are brainstorming, to kick off the New Year with the most exciting and interesting activities.

We need you, our members to join in the organising and attendance at any social or educational activity. The opportunities are there and its up to us to grasp them. What good is a leader if she doesn't take the initiative to grasp an opportunity or want to be a winner!!!

So, keeping in mind the successful work that

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## President's Letter

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I write on our revamped, modern Newsletter. We are at the end of 2003 and soon we will celebrate the birth of a new year 2004. This year is going to be special for the association. It marks our 30th anniversary. That in itself should make us all proud that we are part of the profession, we make the profession, we are the profession. We need to celebrate this anniversary together. We need to inject new life in our profession. I would like to congratulate Alexia, for her courage and enthusiasm on the launching of the new look of the newsletter and as its editor. We need to see more young people, taking an active

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## Useful Internet Sites

[www.ncwmalta.com](http://www.ncwmalta.com)

*This is the website of the National Council of women*

[www.health.gov.mt](http://www.health.gov.mt)

*This is the website of the Ministry of Health*

[www.apec.org.uk](http://www.apec.org.uk)

*This website is designed for Action on Pre-Eclampsia*

[www.nctpregnancyandbabycare.com](http://www.nctpregnancyandbabycare.com)

*The NCT organises antenatal classes, offers breastfeeding advice and discusses postnatal depression*

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has been done over the years, "Let's keep the ball rolling". On behalf of the Midwives Association I would like to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**"A man of knowledge lives by acting, not thinking about acting"**

*Carlos Casteneda*



**Alexia** 😊

## Perceptions of Young People to Breastfeeding

*Presented by Rita Attard at the MUMN Breastfeeding Seminar*

The merits of breastfeeding are widely acknowledged, efforts to promote such breastfeeding benefits in various countries have shown substantial increases in breastfeeding rates although variations by area, class and culture remain. In Malta, breastfeeding rates at the time of discharge from hospital are rather low and may indicate the lowest breastfeeding rates in Europe (Health Promotion Department 2000). Locally 45% of babies were breastfed on discharges in 1996, 49% in 1997 and 46% in 1998, yet this data was recorded only from the state hospital. In 1999, 47% were breastfeeding on discharge and 53% in 2000. This latter data is representative of all women breastfeeding on discharge from both public and private birthing facilities (Health Information Department 2001).

Ineichen et al (1999) argue that the timing of interventions to influence people's perceptions and behaviour is crucial when attempting to promote breastfeeding. Research suggests that most women decide on an infant feeding method either prior to becoming pregnant or very early in pregnancy. From her study of 67 pregnant women Oxby (1994) found that 80% of women had already decided about their infant feeding method in the first trimester of pregnancy and that once decided they were unlikely to change their minds. De-gale (1995) adds that antenatal education can only influence the undecided 20% of mothers. Therefore, researchers in the area believe that if the promotion of breastfeeding is to advance, it needs to address the formation of perceptions to breastfeeding stretching back to school days.

My dissertation entitled 'Perceptions of young people to breastfeeding', addressed sociological aspects relating to breastfeeding success. It discusses surveys which have investigated young people's attitudes towards breastfeeding internationally, together with

influencing factors in infant feeding decisions identified by young people and the effects of promotional campaigns targeted at this age group. The studies have shown that although the majority acknowledge the benefits of breastfeeding, many adolescents hold negative attitudes and misconceptions on breastfeeding. This very often is the result of influences made by society and the media.

Since a comparative study has never been done locally, it would be beneficial to look into the perceptions and views of young Maltese people to breastfeeding. It is anticipated that the findings of this local survey would give an insight into the development of local strategies to help promote breastfeeding in the younger generation, before negative attitudes and influences are deep rooted, and increase resistance to change. Today's youth are tomorrow's parents and breastfeeding promotion would help to eliminate the stigma or taboo associated with breastfeeding and so helps re-establish a breastfeeding culture and increase local breastfeeding rates.

In this local study a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire was distributed to 60 Maltese students, males and females between age 16 and 17, attending a local sixth-form. Results show that all participants have seen a baby being bottle-fed while less have witnessed breastfeeding. Overall, participants were aware of the health benefits of breastfeeding, particularly for the baby. Yet, many participants, females in particular, cited various disadvantages to breastfeeding, which are indicative of negative perceptions and of perceived difficulties with breastfeeding. Most participants have never received information about breastfeeding and the majority would like such information, particularly from a midwife, school and the media. Generally participants did not agree to breastfeeding in public due to issues of privacy. The midwife, the partner, other relatives and friends were considered to be possible positive influences to the choice to breastfeed. However they were also perceived to influence the choice of bottle-feeding. Many participants intend to breastfeed a child of their own and acknowledge breastfeeding as the best infant feeding method. Overall participants anticipate that education on breastfeeding particularly in schools would help to increase the local breastfeeding rates.

These study findings help suggest recommendations for further research and potential implications for practice where the development of promotional breastfeeding strategies would need to address the evident socially-acquired perceptions of young people in order to establish breastfeeding as a social norm.



part. It is we midwives who make the profession. Wake up midwives; be proud of what we have and of what we can achieve.

- The midwife is there with the teenager who needs information on reproduction, sex education.
- The midwife is there with the couple who are planning to achieve or avoid a pregnancy.
- The midwife is there with the woman and her partner who have infertility problems.
- The midwife is there with the mother who is crying with her partner as she has just miscarried.
- The midwife is there with the mother and her partner who are with child.
- The midwife is there with the woman and her partner who is contracting and will soon deliver her child.
- The midwife is there with the mother and her partner who have just lost their child, or whose child is very premature or very sick.
- The midwife is there with the mother and her partner who are at a dilemma on the choice of their decisions for their child, which could affect the lives of all of them.
- The midwife is there with the mother, partner and their child to give them support and information during the postnatal period.
- The midwife is there with the mother and her partner to refer them to other professionals if the need calls for such a decision.

Our predecessors have worked very hard to put midwifery where it is and we have a responsibility to ensure that it continues to meet its goals that of being with the woman, with the child, with the family. I wish you all and your families a blessed Christmas and a Happy New year.

*Rita Borg Xuereb*

## NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN-NCW

### THE MIDWIVES ASSOCIATION INVOLVEMENT WITH THE NCW

The **National Council of Women of Malta** was founded in 1964. It is a non-governmental organization comprising individual members and national organisations. It aims to improve the quality of life for all. In particular it works to promote equality of opportunity for women and enable them to participate effectively at all levels and in all aspects of the life of the community.

The Midwives Association is an affiliate of this organisation. Our involvement allows us to discuss and put forward opinions based on current issues. At the same time there is an exchange of ideas, policies are formulated and change is promoted.

Visit their website at [www.ncwmalta.com](http://www.ncwmalta.com)



#### Notice Board:

- ✓ To ensure that the Midwives Newsletter better represents the association members, we will be accepting contributions, letters and important announcements to be published in the following issues. If you are interested please contact the Editor on tel: 79618401 or by sending an e-mail to [in-touch@hotmail.com](mailto:in-touch@hotmail.com) you can also send your contributions by mail to the association.
- ✓ We are also looking for Midwives who are willing to teach Ante-Natal classes in English and Maltese. If you are interested call at the association office.

# CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY

Christmas is coming and the goose is getting fat... well aren't we all!! Well, we are planning to give you a helping hand to burn off what you eat since we are going to have a great time at the Christmas activity we are organising at the Hard Rock Café' at Bay Street, Paceville.

So, these are the vital details you need to remember:

**DATE:** 19<sup>th</sup> December  
**Time:** 20:00 hrs till late  
**Location:** Hard Rock Café  
**Price:** Lm 6.50 (Ahh il-but!! Who cares it only happens once a year!)

The activity is open for all Midwives – Young and Young at Heart, i.e. all Midwives. To Book please contact either Catherine Cilia or Astrid Zarb at Labour Ward on extension number 1323. Bookings will be received until the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003, so hurry up and book your place.



## Menu

### STARTERS

**SOUP OF THE DAY** – *Fresh Home Made Soup*

OR

**HARD ROCK HOUSE SALAD** – *A Mixture of Crisp Greens Shredded Cheese, Onions, Tomatoes, Black Olives, Carrots and Home-Made Croutons*

OR

**HRC's ORIGINAL ONION RINGS** – *Served with a side of our secret HRC Hickory BBQ Sauce*

### MAIN COURSE

**PIG SANDWICH** – *Smoked Pork Hickories, served with BBQ Sauce and Fries*

OR

**STRACKED ROAST BEEF SANDWICH** – *Roast Beef, Cheddar Cheese, chili-marinated onions, salad, roasted garlic mayo; all served on HRC sandwich bread and fries*

OR

**HICKORY BBQ CHICKEN** – *Grilled Half Chicken and fries*

### DESSERT

**HRC's SIGNATURE ICE-CREAM**

OR **CHOCOLATE GATEAU**

OR **HOT FUDGE SUNDAE**

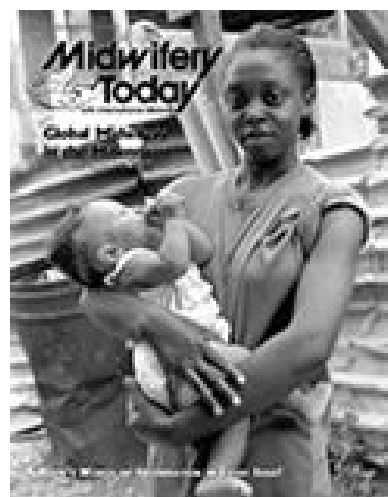
**AND COFFEE**

# INTERNATIONAL PAGE

Sara Wickman who is currently a lecturer in midwifery at Anglia Polytech University (UK), has drawn up an action list of small things all midwives can do to change societal attitudes towards birth and promote midwifery and the midwifery model, derived from some research she carried out a few years ago. So lets get going and allow them to be part of our New Years resolutions...

Here goes the list:

- Get a bumper sticker that supports midwifery and gentle birth.
- Wear a T-shirt that does the same!
- Talk to everybody you meet about what you do and why you do it.
- Be able to cite the evidence for midwifery care, homebirth and so on.
- Offer women free/low-cost experiences of midwifery services (free tours, short talks or pregnancy testing). This can enable women to meet midwives for themselves or bring potential clients into a birth center to see what they could be experiencing.
- Talk to people in an unbiased way.
- Talk to children/school audiences.
- Offer workshops/talks to the public.
- Breastfeed in public.
- Offer to go on local TV/radio.
- Write short articles for local newspapers.
- Write to TV shows that misrepresent birth.
- Create and distribute information leaflets about midwifery/gentle birth.
- Target partners and grandparents as well as women themselves.
- Arrange to have your births listed in the local papers and offer photos on special occasions (e.g., first baby of the new year).
- Enable women to reflect on their experiences.
- Encourage others to reflect on their practice.
- Encourage people to visit your place of work.
- Develop a team of birth change agents in your area, to work together and support each other.
- Ensure that women you know understand the enormity of the decisions they need to make.
- Seek opportunities to speak to teenage girls.
- Be able to lend books/videos.
- Know your enemy and practice his argument!
- Foster a dialogue with women's groups.
- Ask everybody you take care of to tell a friend about their experience of midwifery and about their birth.



**Source: Midwifery Today**

*This article originally appeared in Midwifery Today Issue 53 (Spring 2000), page 28*

**Sara Wickham, RM, MA, BA (Hons), PGCE (A)**, is a direct-entry midwife who has practiced in the U.K. and U.S. Sara works part-time as a Senior Lecturer in Midwifery at Anglia Polytechnic University in England. She also works as an independent midwife, freelance workshop leader, writer and researcher. Sara is the Web mistress of [www.withwoman.co.uk](http://www.withwoman.co.uk), as well as being U.K. country contact and contributing editor for **Midwifery Today** magazine.

**PS: some things on the list wont be new ideas to us, but they might act as a gentle reminder that simple, everyday things might have a positive impact on the way our society sees birth and midwifery.**

# STUDENTS' CORNER

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year that the B.Sc (Hons) Midwifery course is up and running. These student midwives are out on the wards working with us, observing our methods of practice and at the same time compiling their logbooks once they have practiced a skill. It's our duty not to get lost in our routine work, but grab the chance and discuss with these students. They are rich in theory and exposed to new research studies and findings. So, together we can constantly learn from each other. After all they are tomorrow's midwives.

Look out for their opinions in next year's newsletter, or shall I say the next issue of In-Touch!!

## Midwife Jokes:

**If you've ever crocheted with an amni hook...  
...you might be a midwife**

**If you hear "doppler" radar on the Weather Channel and your ears perk up...  
...you might be a midwife**

**If you talk about seeing the "crown" and you weren't at Buckingham Palace...  
...you might be a midwife**

**If you've had your picture taken so many times with babies you should be running for office...  
...you might be a midwife**

**If you know that a fetoscope does not measure shoe size...  
...you might be a midwife**

**If you think the only use for forceps is as salad tongs...  
...you might be a midwife**

**If you've made more great catches than a goalkeeper...  
...you might be a midwife**

**If you know a cesarean is not a salad...  
...you might be a midwife**

**If you know that a pinard horn is not a musical instrument...  
...you might be a midwife**

*Continues next issue...*

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