

12-2016

Looking forward to more and better midwifery in Asia in 2017

Rafat Jan
rafat.jan@aku.edu

Edwin van Teijlingen
Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ecommons.aku.edu/jam>

 Part of the [Nursing Midwifery Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jan, R, & Teijlingen, E v. Looking forward to more and better midwifery in Asia in 2017. *Journal of Asian Midwives*. 2016;3(2):1-2.

Looking forward to more and better midwifery in Asia in 2017

As we are drafting this end-of-year editorial, an important news this autumn was the World Health Organization (WHO) changing its recommendation on antenatal care.¹ WHO issued a new series of recommendations to improve quality of antenatal care in order to reduce the risk of stillbirths and pregnancy complications and give women a positive pregnancy experience. One key change is to increase the number of recommended antenatal check-ups from four to eight. According to the WHO evidence suggests that a higher frequency of antenatal contacts by women and adolescent girls with the health system is associated with a reduced likelihood of stillbirth. The 2016 WHO recommendations have an element of flexibility around the delivery of antenatal care based on countries' needs and human resources. Thus antenatal care could be provided by midwives or other trained health workers in health facilities or through community outreach services.

This year we have seen some interesting developments around midwifery education in South Asia. Nepal has started formal midwifery training. Whilst in the Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) offered funding to improve the quality of midwifery education and create an enabling environment for a midwifery-led care in Bangladesh.

Zika virus was in the news this year especially prior to and during the Olympic Games in Brasil.²⁻³ The infection has been linked to severe birth defects in some 30 countries, with more than two thousand cases of nervous-system malformations reported in Brazil alone. Earlier this year there were worries that travellers to the Olympics might spread the virus across the globe. The Zika virus needs mosquitoes such as the ones spreading Dengue fever and malaria. The key fear was that the Zika virus would spread with visitors to areas where malaria is endemic. Fortunately, this did not appear to have happened and in November of this year the WHO declared that the Zika virus was no longer a global medical emergency.⁴ However, it is still classing the virus and related microcephaly among babies as a 'significant and enduring' threat. The WHO reminds us to be vigilant as Zika has not gone.

We like to thank all who have supported *The Journal of Asian Midwives* in 2016! We are grateful to our authors, reviewers, the library staff at Aga Khan University including Mr. Khawaja Mustafa and Mr. Ashraf Sharif, our reviewers (listed on our website) and, of course, our readers. We particularly like to thank Kiran Mubeen and Mehtab Jaffer for their hard work in the editorial office and Mr. Cameron van Teijlingen for proof-reading contributions to the journal.

We wish all friends of *The Journal of Asian Midwives* a Happy, Healthy & Peaceful 2017!

Professors Rafat Jan & Edwin van Teijlingen

References:

1. WHO (2016) *Pregnant women must be able to access the right care at the right time, says WHO*. Geneva: WHO. [press release: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2016/antenatal-care-guidelines/en/> accessed Nov. 2016].
2. BBC News (28 May 2016) *Zika crisis: WHO rejects 'move Rio Olympics' call* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-36401150>, Accessed Nov. 2016.
3. van Teijlingen, E, Sathian, B, Simkhada, P. Zika & Nepal: a far greater risk for its population than to individuals. *Medical Science* 2016;4(2): 312-313. <http://www.pubmedhouse.com/journals/ms/articles/1064/PMHID1064.pdf>
4. WHO (2016) *Fifth meeting of the Emergency Committee under the International Health Regulations (2005) regarding microcephaly, other neurological disorders and Zika virus*. Geneva: WHO. [press release: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2016/zika-fifth-ec/en/> accessed Nov. 2016].