



# State of Midwifery Research in France

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## INTRODUCTION

Research in midwifery has for main objective to study practices in midwifery in order to improve the quality of care and to promote practices based on recent knowledge and evidence. ICM considered research as an essential component of midwifery. In France, it is necessary to question certain current practices and there is no doctorate in midwifery, and midwifery is not recognized as an academic discipline. In 2016, The body of knowledge they produce is not well documented.

**Objectif** This study aims to describe the state of midwifery research in France. In particular, we report on the midwives' experience and perception of research and publication. We also describe their publications in in scientific and professional journals

### Methods

A study of French midwives' experience of research and publication was coupled with a bibliometric analysis of their published articles.

**An online survey:** from June to November 2016

The link to access the questionnaire was forwarded to the National Conference of Midwives Teachers in Midwifery (CNEMa) and the National College of Midwives (CNSF) with a request to disseminate the survey to their peers.

### Inclusion criteria

- being a midwife working in France or having studied for her midwifery degree in France;  
- holding a PhD Masters' degree or studying for a PhD or a Masters at the time of the study or having already published articles (whatever the publication support: professional or scientific journals).

**Bibliometric analysis:** Articles are described according to the conceptual framework for quality maternal and newborn care proposed by Mary Renfrew and colleagues which describes the maternal and newborn health components of a health system needed by childbearing women and newborn infants (Renfrew et al., 2014).

**Triangulation:** during a meeting the investigators presented and discussed the preliminary findings with a group of midwives belonging to CNEMa or CNSF to refine their interpretation and identify any additional data analysis required for a comprehensive report of findings.

**Ethical approval:** This research was declared to the National Commission of Informatics and Liberty before its launching (number 1961146). Information presenting the study, guarantying the respect of anonymity of respondents

## Results

Of the 146 eligible midwives, 15 (10.3%) had a PhD degree, 54 (37.0%) reported having participated in midwifery research programs. Publication experience was reported by 73 midwives, including 26 (17.8%) who have published at least one article on midwifery in a peer reviewed journal. 97.2% of midwives with publication experience considered it useful to publish but 75.7% considered that it was a difficult process. Lack of time, not mastering scientific writing and English language were their main barriers to publication. We identified 218 articles. Pregnancy and birth were the two most studied genital life phases. Eighty-nine (28.4%) of these 314 articles were about midwifery practices or interventions

The number of published articles on midwifery has significantly improved in time, with a coefficient of progression of +1.18% per year

Content of 134 articles on midwifery published by French midwives in scientific and professional journals

| Phase of genital life               | N= 134 | %    |
|-------------------------------------|--------|------|
| Pre-pregnancy                       | 5      | 3.7  |
| Pregnancy (and abortion)            | 35     | 26.1 |
| Birth                               | 35     | 26.1 |
| Post-partum                         | 24     | 17.9 |
| 1st years of life and breastfeeding | 14     | 10.4 |
| All maternity phases                | 24     | 17.9 |
| Other/not appropriate               | 12     | 9.0  |

Characteristics of 134 articles on midwifery published by French midwives in scientific and professional journals

|  |           |             |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| <b>Research articles</b>                   | <b>73</b> | <b>61.7</b> |
| Systematic review, meta-analyses           | 9         | 7.6         |
| Randomized controlled trial                | 0         | -           |
| Non randomized trial***                    | 1         | 0.8         |
| Observational study                        | 63        | 53.4        |
| <b>Other articles</b>                      | <b>45</b> | <b>38.1</b> |
| Opinion, commentary, non-systematic review | 12        | 10.2        |
| Study protocol                             | 1         | 0.8         |
| Unknown/not appropriate                    | 32        | 27.1        |

Type of study is analysed only for articles on biomedical topics or health system. Before/after studies are also included in this class.

## Conclusion

We evidenced that although midwives in France have a limited experience of research, they publish an increasing number of scientific articles on midwifery topics. Scientific publications in midwifery in French language are limited mainly due to the lack of scientific midwifery journal in French. However, publishing in French would facilitate the access to knowledge and evidence of midwifery practitioners in French speaking countries, including these where maternal mortality ratios are very high.

## Highlights:

1. French midwives increasingly publish on maternal and perinatal health
2. Scientific publications on midwifery in French language are limited
3. Political involvement is needed to strengthen midwifery research in France
4. Publications on midwifery in French are also needed in French speaking Africa

