BJM
British Journal of Midwifery

Joint Editors-in-Chief
Dame Tina Lavender and Yana Richens

Editor
Lauren Newman
bjm@markallengroup.com

Commercial Manager
Bowie Dee
bowie.dee@markallengroup.com

Group Classified Manager
Cejay Scafe
cejay.scafe@markallengroup.com

Circulation Director
Sally Boettcher

Group Production Manager
Jon Redmayne

Production Assistants
Jamie Hodgskin and Lee Upton

Editorial Director
Julie Smith

Publishing Director
Chloe Benson

Managing Director
Anthony Kerr
anthony.kerr@markallengroup.com

Chief Executive Officer
Ben Allen

UK PERSONAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Quarterly Direct Debit	£41
Annual Direct Debit	£161
Annual Credit Card	£169
1yr Student	£99
2yr Annual Credit Card	£287
3yr Annual Credit Card	£406

Subscribe online at: www.magsubscriptions.com

For further information please contact the subscriptions department on 0800 137201 or +44 (0)1722 716997 when calling from outside of the UK.

Contact institutions@markallengroup.com for institutional pricing

A MARK ALLEN GROUP COMPANY

www.markallengroup.com

The *British Journal of Midwifery* is published by MA Healthcare Ltd, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7738 5454
Website: www.britishjournalofmidwifery.com

MAG ONLINE LIBRARY

© MA Healthcare Ltd, 2018. All rights reserved. No part of the *British Journal of Midwifery* may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission of the Publishing Director.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the editor or the *British Journal of Midwifery*. Advertisements in the journal do not imply endorsement of the products or services advertised. The journal accepts advertising from all companies operating ethically and in accordance with UK law and regulations. Editorial content in the journal is entirely separate from advertising and, unless clearly stated, commercial companies have no influence over the content of articles.

ISSN 0969 – 4900
Printed by Pensord Press Ltd, Blackwood, NP12 2YA

Cover picture: Adobe Stock/RayCan

The paper used within this publication has been sourced from Chain-of-Custody certified manufacturers, operating within international environmental standards, to ensure sustainable sourcing of the raw materials, sustainable production and to minimise our carbon footprint.

© 2018 MA Healthcare Ltd

Transforming care for all

The 16th national Current Issues in Midwifery conference, organised by *British Journal of Midwifery* (BJM), this year took 'Transforming maternity services, improving care' as its central theme. Alongside policy sessions, many speakers chose to focus on improving care for the most vulnerable women in maternity services. Over the 2-day event, presentations addressed a vast range of issues, from addiction to female genital mutilation.

According to research presented by Jenny McLeish, of the National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit, many vulnerable women had positive experiences of maternity services, praising the 'consistently kind care' and the signposts to other sources of support. However, the same study also found examples of negative attitudes that left women scared to complain, for fear of being branded a 'troublemaker'.

Thankfully, there are those working to help and support the most vulnerable. At the *BJM* Midwifery in Practice Awards, stories were told of midwives supporting women with addiction, perinatal mental health nurses addressing barriers to treatment and charities working to prevent the separation of homeless women and their babies. Although these services may be isolated or few, their existence is a positive sign that risk factors are being identified and care adapted for marginalised populations.

However, although the barriers to accessing care may be obvious for some women, it is important that invisible barriers are also recognised and addressed. In her presentation, McLeish asked: 'if two-thirds of women are satisfied with maternity care, who is left out?' The answer: women who were young, black and minority ethnic (BME), single mothers or on a low income—factors that may not be obvious disadvantages in maternity services.

Indeed, even the most successful woman can be vulnerable, as Serena Williams (2018), no less, recently showed, in her account of the pulmonary embolism and abdominal haematoma that she experienced in childbirth (Philby, 2018; Williams, 2018). Williams is 36, married and wealthy, but as a BME woman, she is at risk, with studies finding that 46% of deaths among African-American women were preventable (compared to 33% among white women) (Berg et al, 2005), and that black, college-educated women who gave birth in hospital were more likely than white women who never finished high school to experience severe complications (New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2016).

These are stark findings and should not be ignored. Although solutions will be the work of months of research, improvements can nevertheless begin in individual maternity settings, by starting conversations with women of all backgrounds in order to address inequalities in healthcare, however hidden. As Lisa Ramsey, Service User Voice Policy Manager for Maternity at NHS England expressed during her presentation at the conference: 'If we only ever hear from white, middle class women, we will only create maternity services that tailor to those women'. Once problems are identified, maternity services excel at providing kind, supportive and transformative interventions, but the challenge is to identify where more work still needs to be done. As Audre Lorde once famously said: 'I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.' BJM

Berg CJ, Harper MA, Atkinson SM et al. Preventability of pregnancy-related deaths: results of a state-wide review. Obstet Gynecol. 2005; 106(6): 1228-34

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Severe Maternal Morbidity in New York City, 2008–2012. New York, NY: NYC Health; 2016

Philby C. Serena Williams and the realities of the 'maternal mortality crisis'. 2018. https://tinyurl.com/y9c5g5hn (accessed 22 February 2018)

Williams S. What my life-threatening experience taught me about giving birth. 2018. https://tinyurl.com/y9uvu2a7 (accessed 21 February 2018)

Lauren Newman
Editor