

Centre for Midwifery & Women's Health Newsletter | Spring 2025

Introduction

Welcome to this Spring edition of our CMWH newsletter!

With the welcome appearance of Spring flowers and the diminishing of horrible winter bugs, thank you to all our contributors.

If you have a story linked to CMWH you want to share in the next edition, or would like to be on our mailing list, please email Dominique Mylod on dmylod@bournemouth.ac.uk or Malika Felton on mfelton@bournemouth.ac.uk

Aims of the centre

We promote the health and wellbeing of women, babies and their families by enhancing practice through education, research and scholarship.

Our strategy is to develop nationally and internationally recognised research that:

- Promotes the health and well-being of women, babies and their families
- Underpins clinical practice
- Informs policy making in relation to maternity care
- Ensures relevance and impact by maximising service user/voluntary sector involvement and the dissemination of results to health and social care professionals, service users and the voluntary sector
- Undertakes work across a wide methodological range.

Our educational and research activity has gained national and international recognition for its contribution to the enhancement of professional practice and maternal and perinatal health.

For general enquiries about the Centre for Midwifery & Women's Health contact: CMWH@Bournemouth.ac.uk

www.bournemouth.ac.uk/cmwh



BU_CMWH



Featured faces in CMWH

Bernadette Chubb Consultant Midwife UHD

Outside of my work life I am a mum to 5, soon to be a nanny to one and I captain a Championship rugby team! I feel very fortunate to have such variety in my role. I run a Birth Choices and a Birth Debrief clinic. I recently collaborated in a project to reduce Obstetric and Anal Sphincter Injuries; we are taking a poster to the London Maternity & Midwifery Conference. I also developed an award winning training session on Understanding Bias and Equality which we run as a study day; I am keen to invite our student colleagues. I also lead on the Saving Babies' Lives Care Bundle to look and learn from incidents.



I embrace all the challenges in my role and I have a very supportive team around me. This time next year I'll be focusing on UHD's role to provide the best standards of care to all women and their families and getting into our brand new BEACH building!



Maryam Malkian BU PGR

I joined the MRes programme at BU in September 2024, bringing my background in midwifery and a deep passion for maternal and neonatal health research. My focus is on exploring breastfeeding knowledge and attitudes prior to pregnancy. The UK offers a fascinating setting with its cultural diversity and varied healthcare experiences providing a rich context for examining how different factors influence breastfeeding knowledge and attitudes across communities.

What I love most about my role is the opportunity to engage with evidence-based research that could improve maternal and neonatal health. Exploring perspectives on breastfeeding and comparing how knowledge and attitudes are shaped is incredibly rewarding.

As an international student, adapting to a new academic and cultural environment while pursuing my research and personal interests has been an enriching experience. I'm grateful for the support from Bournemouth University and CMWH, which has made this journey both rewarding and seamless.

This time next year, I'll be advancing maternal and child health research. I'm eager to see where this path will take me and how my work can make a broader impact.

Featured faces in CMWH

Dr Chloe Case, Lecturer in Nutrition

I love the diversity of our academic roles day-to-day. This means I can spend the morning on campus teaching our students and the afternoon out at a charity speaking to people about my research. There's never a dull moment but this comes with the challenges of juggling multiple priorities!

Outside of my work life, I have two children and a cat called Olaf.

This time next year I'll be working towards applying for a UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship to continue my work supporting women in alcohol recovery to maintain a healthy and balance diet.



CMWH Research Day

Hold the date for the CMWH Research Day on Wednesday 18th June 10am-4pm.

CMWH team will hold a research day in BGB to discuss:

- Getting started with grant writing
- Working with the NHS
- Building networks

More information will follow.



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Advancing the Science of Physiologic Birth Research Cluster

<https://scienceofbirth.ubc.ca/>

The Science of Birth interdisciplinary consortium meets online bimonthly for globally attended webinars and discussions on advancing the understanding of physiology and care in childbearing. Early Career Researchers from all related fields are invited to join up and participate at contact@scienceofbirth.ca

Successful bid to improve inequities in maternal and infant health

CMWH Profs Vanora Hundley and Edwin van Teijlingen together with Prof. Huseyin Dogan and Dr. Deniz Cetinkaya from BU's Dept. of Computing and Informatics collaborate with Sheffield Hallam University's Maternity and Infant Health Equity Research Centre (MIHERC) to reduce health inequalities for marginalised mothers and babies as part of the [NIHR Challenge Call: Maternity Disparities Consortium](#).

MIHERC will work with South Yorkshire Digital Health Hub (SYDHH), the Health Determinant Research Collaboration, Doncaster, and a range of local and national partners. Collective strengths include expertise in community engagement and PPIE (Public & Patient Involvement & Engagement); intelligent digital solutions in maternity service delivery; research into under-served communities; and capacity building of both communities and maternity staff.

The NIHR commended the plan to establish MIHERC based on multi-ethnic and interdisciplinary partnerships in the third sector, its focus on capacity building and community engagement in the field of digitalisation and data connectivity. The bid, which covers nine collaborating centres across the UK, secured funding of £50 million.



BU hosts NIHR MIHERC meeting

On 7th January 2025, Professor Hora Soltani from Sheffield Hallam University chaired the 2nd meeting of the SHU-BU collaboration, as part of the NIHR Challenge Maternity Disparities Consortium.

Discussions included current pregnancy apps and translation digital solutions focused on ethnic minority women in the UK. BU contributors included:

- Prof. Mel Hughes presenting the BU PIER partnership
- Dr. Orlanda Harvey on domestic abuse
- Dr. Linda Agyemang on engaging with Black women in Dorset health care
- Dr. Sarah Thomas on an app for MS fatigue management
- Olumuyiwa Ayorinde on the HIOW Constabulary Health & Wellbeing App
- Dr. Malika Felton on the Lifelight app for non-contactless blood pressure measurement
- Dr. Dominique Mylod on the BU Early Labour App
- Thank you to the other PGRs who presented on the day

Research in CMWH

Clinical Academic careers get a boost through the NIHR funded INSIGHT programme

The INSIGHT programme is open to applications. Further details on the programme website: [NIHR Insight Programme for South West Central](https://www.insight-southwestcentral.net)

Susara Blunden, a part time MRes student on the NIHR funded INSIGHT programme –South-West Central hosted by BU, works at University Hospitals Dorset . She is using this programme to further her career as a clinical academic. Her research is in the field of endometriosis which impacts the lives of approximately 1.5 million women in the UK. Women can wait on average 9 years for diagnosis and Susara is exploring how the time to diagnosis might be reduced, so that women may receive appropriate treatment and management strategies to improve their quality of life. Click here to read [Susara's story](#).

CMWH Research Seminars

The CMWH seminars are held online monthly, featuring presentations from one member of staff and one postgraduate researcher. In the latest seminar, Prof. Edwin van Teijlingen led a discussion on the experience of multi-disciplinary research, and Md Shafkat Hossain presented his research on community-led drowning prevention in Bangladesh.

The next Spring seminar is **Friday 28th March 2025 12 noon**. Hear about Laura Stedman's research on the impact of NICU admission on mother-infant dyads and Susara Blunden the process of diagnosing endometriosis in the UK.

Book here using the [Eventbrite](#) link.



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NIHR | National Institute for Health and Care Research

Want to secure better outcomes for patients?

Our MRes qualifications can help you develop your research skills alongside your clinical career.

If you are in the first five years of your practice experience as a registered healthcare, social work, public health or health scientist worker, we'd love to hear from you.

- Study at UWE Bristol or Bournemouth University
- Start in September 2025
- Part-time and full-time study available
- Tuition fees and stipend included

Find out more and apply now at www.insight-southwestcentral.net

Applications close 31 March 2025

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CMWH Women's Health Workshops

The first workshop was organised by Drs. Debora Almeida and Sumanto Haldar who ensured there were refreshments for all and a chance to discuss women's health research. There were three presenters; Dr Sarah Hillier spoke about the importance of considering nutrition in all elements of health and wellbeing and, in particular, during the menopause. Dr Rachel Mosely spoke about how her research in relation to autism has broadened to include menopause which is an under recognised area of research. While Dr Becky Neal spoke about her research relating to cold water swimming and mental health.

The next CMWH workshop is **Wednesday 19th March 2025 (1-3pm)**. Please join us to network with others in the group.

Research in CMWH

Recommendations for Cold Water Swimming and Pregnancy

Dr Malika Felton is part of the SwimHer Research Network, which has published on perceived benefits of cold water swimming for [menstrual and perimenopausal symptoms](#), and [swimming habits of women who cold water swim](#). Now they have published consensus recommendations for [cold water swimming during pregnancy](#). For more details about the importance of this work, read the [WiSEAN blog](#).



Public Engagement Event – Menopause and physical activity

Kate Rattley, PhD student in CMWH, ran her second public engagement in January 2025. Participants in her research study on menopause and physical activity were invited to BU to hear about the results from her research project, 27 attended and discussed on where future research in exercise and menopause should focus. They requested an infographic outlining the results of the study in an easy to digest format, which has now been shared with women.

CMWH Pump Priming Funding

Chloe Casey has been awarded Pump Priming funding from The Wessex Health Partners to lead Nourish the New You, a participant engagement project exploring women's experiences of alcohol recovery and their journey toward a healthier diet and lifestyle in sobriety.

In collaboration with the University of Southampton, Arts University Bournemouth, Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council, The Friendly Food Club, We Are With You, and Soberistas, this project combines practical cooking sessions with creative workshops. Participants will work together to produce a collaborative piece of art that amplifies their lived experiences.

The final work will be showcased on the Wessex Health Partners website and social media to mark International Women's Day on 8th March.



CMWH Pump Priming Funding

Dr. Rebecca Neal has been awarded Pump Priming funding from the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences for: Building capacity for research into the impact of climate change on the health and wellbeing of pregnant women and newborns in Nepal.



NeFCoS
Nepal Family Cohort Study

Her work includes training with experts in Hong Kong and London, as well as capacity building and PPIE in Nepal utilising our existing networks, including Green Tara Nepal. Funding will help prepare a collaborative research bid with academics and stakeholders from Coventry University, University of Portsmouth, Dhulikhel Hospital and Tribhuvan University (Nepal).

Next steps include writing with researchers from the Nepal Family Cohort Study, a prospective cohort study of families in Nepal, before co-developing research ideas during a visit to Nepal in Spring.

Education in CMWH

World Menopause Day – 18th October

Bournemouth University collaborated with partners across Dorset and Wessex to focus on Women's Health and for World Menopause Day. The aim has been to get people talking about the menopause and sharing stories. There is much to celebrate with the great work happening in this area, in particular the inauguration of the Women's Health Hubs. Women in Dorset have highlighted the need to prioritise the menopause as a research topic.

Many institutions have set up a menopause group and are providing support to work colleagues to improve understanding. Earlier this year local experts Rosie Harper and Dr Emma Hayward at Bournemouth University led a discussion on the menopause to raise public awareness.

Bournemouth University is working in collaboration with NHS Dorset, Dorset Women CIC, and Health Innovation Wessex and many other key partners as part of the Dorset Women's Health Programme. One of the projects is to focus on menopause support led by Dr Tim Hillard and we have been working closely with women to understand their needs and to work with GPs and their teams to ensure specialist support is available.

CMWH Symposium: Spotlight on the Menopause

On 20th November, Prof Carol Clark and Dr Sarah Hillier from CMWH hosted its Autumn Health Symposium: Spotlight on the Menopause. The event provided guests with a better understanding of the menopause, including a discussion on the latest treatment options and menopause in the workplace.



Speakers included:

- Tim Hillard: Consultant Gynaecologist and Menopause Specialist, University Hospitals Dorset.
- Dr Abbie Laing: GP and Menopause Specialist, University Hospitals Dorset.
- Kathy Abernethy: Menopause Specialist Nurse and BMS Menopause Specialist, Director "The Menopause Course"
- Dr Sarah Hillier: Senior Lecturer in Nutrition, Centre for Midwifery and Women's Health.

As part of the event, the CMWH showcased the fantastic research we are doing in this area at BU in a series of elevator style presentations from colleagues Dr Hyun-Joo Lim Principal Academic in Sociology, and Psychology PhD researcher Eunhee Kim. A recording of all talks is available on [YouTube](#).

BU staff wellbeing resources and information for the menopause are available on the new People Hub on SharePoint at [Menopause](#)

Education in CMWH

Posters and Prizes

Edible prizes were awarded to Year 1 West BSC Midwifery students for their posters researching the impact of perinatal infections on women and babies. Well done to Isabella Bailey, Amy Jones, Tasha Baron, Maddie Brock & Amy Di Marco for their poster on HIV and Sophie De Burton, Ruby Law, Evie Willis, Imogen Braby, Maddy Hughes, Jodie Way & Ellie Thatcher for their poster on HSV-2.

HSV-2 Awareness

Group Name: Cool Catheters
Amy Jones, Isabella Bailey, Tasha Baron,
Maddie Brock, Amy DiMarco

It is important to not be embarrassed about having HSV-2, just talk to your midwife and she can help you to discuss the next steps!

Definition

Herpes simplex virus (HSV), known as herpes, is a common infection that can cause painful blisters or sores. It primarily spreads by skin-to-skin contact. It is treatable but not curable.

Symptoms

Herpes can cause painful blisters or sores that appear on the genitals, mouth, or anus. Other symptoms include fever, body aches, and swollen lymph nodes.

Symptoms of herpes in babies can include: Blister, Fever, Irritability, Feeding difficulties, Lethargy, Skin color changes, Seizures, and other symptoms.

How it is transmitted

Herpes can be spread all throughout pregnancy. During pregnancy, the virus rarely spreads to the baby through the placenta, but in rare cases, it can cause congenital herpes. During birth, if the mother has an active genital herpes outbreak during vaginal delivery, the baby can contract neonatal herpes, which can be serious or even life-threatening. After birth it can spread through kissing or close contact, leading to cold sores.

Effects on Mother/Baby

HSV-2 primarily affects the genital area around the mother and can cause: Painful sores/blisters around the genital area, or thighs, itching, tingling, or burning before sores appear, Flu-like symptoms (fever, swollen lymph nodes, body aches), Pain when urinating if sores are near the urethra. Vaginal discharge in some cases. Some people have no symptoms but can still spread the virus.

Some of the effects that HSV-2 can have on babies includes: Blisters filled with fluid, Fever, Poor feeding, lethargy, Difficulty breathing, Grunting, Blue skin or tongue, Seizures, Jaundice, and bleeding easily. It is important that a newborn with herpes is noticed quickly and treated immediately.

HSV can be dangerous or even life-threatening for a newborn as it can cause a widespread infection that affects the baby's major organs, including their brain.

Treatment

Acyclovir can be administered orally to pregnant women with first-episode genital herpes or recurrent herpes. However, there's no permanent cure for HSV-2, but vaccines and topical microbicides are being developed to prevent infections.

If a newborn contracts herpes they will need to be hospitalized and given intravenous antiviral medication. After the initial treatment, the baby may need to take oral antiviral medication for six months.

Statistics

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 520 million people aged 15-49 have herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2). This is about 13% of the world's population in this age group.

Photo

Hope In Health: HIV Awareness For The Maternal Journey

What is HIV?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) weakens the immune system by attacking CD4 cells, and if untreated, can lead to AIDS. During pregnancy, HIV can be passed from mother to baby through pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding. However, with proper treatment using antiretroviral therapy (ART), the risk of transmission is reduced to less than 1%. ART helps lower the viral load, making it safer for both mother and baby. Most women with HIV can have healthy pregnancies and can give birth vaginally. Around 100,000 people are living with HIV in the UK, you aren't alone.

Symptoms in women

Symptoms that are present 2-4 weeks after exposure:

- Fatigue
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Sore throat
- Rash
- Muscle aches/tiredness
- Diarrhea
- Night sweats
- Fever

Symptoms in infants

- Poor feeding or difficulty feeding
- Failure to thrive (not gaining weight properly)
- Persistent or severe diarrhea (e.g., respiratory infections)
- Fever
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Skin rashes
- Frequent coughing or respiratory issues

Treatment available to you and coping mechanisms

Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) Program: ART is a combination of drugs that suppress the virus, keeping it at a low level. This helps to reduce the risk of complications and allows for a healthier pregnancy. The sooner you start ART, the better the outcomes. Your midwife will discuss the best time to start ART, usually within the first trimester. It's important to take ART consistently to keep the virus under control. Your midwife will monitor your viral load and CD4 count to ensure the treatment is working. If you have any side effects, your midwife can help you manage them. Remember, taking ART significantly reduces the risk of passing HIV to your baby.

Screening options for HIV

Women at risk for HIV or pregnant women can get tested for HIV through the NHS. Testing is confidential and free of charge. You can get tested at a sexual health clinic, a GP surgery, or a community testing site. If you are pregnant, you can get tested during your antenatal care. If you are not pregnant, you can get tested at any time. If you test positive, you will be offered ART to keep the virus under control. If you test negative, you will be offered advice on how to stay healthy and avoid getting HIV. Remember, knowing your status is the first step to staying healthy.

Preventatives

There are several ways to prevent HIV:

- Using condoms correctly every time you have sex.
- Not sharing needles or syringes.
- Getting vaccinated for Hepatitis B.
- Avoiding sex with someone who has HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Using pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) if you are at high risk of getting HIV.
- Using post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) if you think you may have been exposed to HIV.

Personalised Maternal Care for Women with HIV

Women with HIV can still have a healthy pregnancy and deliver a healthy baby. With the right care and support, the risks are low. Your midwife will provide you with personalised care, including regular monitoring of your health and the health of your baby. You will also receive emotional and psychological support. Remember, you are not alone, and there is a lot of support available to you.

Helpful things you can do

- Take your ART as prescribed.
- Attend all your antenatal appointments.
- Eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly.
- Get plenty of rest and manage stress.
- Avoid alcohol and smoking.
- Use condoms with any partners who do not have HIV.
- Get vaccinated for all recommended vaccines.
- Tell your midwife about all the medicines you are taking.
- Ask for help if you need it.

MRes and PhD Viva successes

Congratulations to midwifery lecturer Laura Steadman who recently passed her MRes Viva on *The Impact of Neonatal Intensive Care Admission At Term Following Gestational Diabetes Mellitus: A Neglected Area*.

Congratulations to Vanessa Bartholomew who successfully defended her doctoral thesis: *'The prevalence of pain catastrophising in pregnancy and its influence on labour'*, supervised by Professors Vanora Hundley, Carol Clark and Ben Parris.

Congratulations to Dr. Soluchana Dhakal-Rai whose latest PhD paper **'Explaining rising caesarean section rates in urban Nepal: A mixed-methods study'** was published in February in *PLOS One*. This is the seventh paper Soluchana has authored based on her research! Sulochana graduated last November with a Ph.D. from Bournemouth University; her CMHW supervisors were Dr. Juliet Wood and Prof. Edwin van Teijlingen.

BU PGR Conference 2024

Dr. Emma Hayward presented her doctoral project on *'A feminist multimethod qualitative study exploring how hormonal contraception affects female pleasure'* at the BU 16th Annual Postgraduate Research Conference on 27th November 2024. Posters were presented by doctoral students Abi Wheeler on mothers' experiences with breastfeeding, birth trauma and perinatal mental health; Anna Preece on disordered eating for women with alcohol dependence, Elizabeth Leddy on sex / ethnicity on pre-hospital analgesia and Jess Correia on psychotropic medication use in pregnancy. Posters can be viewed virtually at:

<https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/postgraduate-research-culture-community/conferences-exhibitions-showcases>

Practice in CMWH

Women's Health Hub launch

Since the launch of the NHS England Women's Health Strategy in 2022, CMWH members have been working with partners across Dorset to develop the Dorset Women's Health Programme.

On Thursday 24th April 2025 we are holding a celebration event, to showcase the amazing work that has been achieved, with an opportunity to have a say about what happens next.

This event will:

- Showcase the collaborative partnership between Dorset Women CIC, NHS Dorset, and our other partners.
- Unveil our new Women's Health Website: a local evidence-based online resource which aims to signpost and support women throughout their healthcare journey in Dorset.
- Include presentations by guest speakers and informative panel discussions on high-priority subject areas in women's health.
- Provide insights from some of the women who participated in the projects during the programme.
- Host discussions on lessons learned and on formulating strategies for ensuring the sustainability of the positive changes that have been made.

Book your place - Women's Health Hub launch

Please book a free place via [Eventbrite](#)

Location: The Dorford Centre, Dorchester, DT1 1RR

Date and Time: Thursday 24th April 2025. 9.30am (for a 10am start) to 3.30pm



CMWH collaborating with NHS Dorset

Academics from CMWH have been working with NHS Dorset on their Women's Health Programme led by Helen Crook. Prof Carol Clark and Rosie Harper have been involved with the Pelvic health group. Dr Linda Agyemang and Prof Vanora Hundley have been working to improve access and care for minoritised groups.



Following the launch of a pilot 'Train the Trainer' programme led by a collaborative team of academics and clinicians across Dorset, a total of 19 clinicians have received the training and are beginning to train others. The aim is for an interprofessional group of clinicians to be able to provide guidance to women about their pelvic floor as part of a consultation. To enable women to carry out a correct pelvic floor contraction and then to sign post women to self-help using the NHS Squeezy app. Health innovation Wessex are carrying out a real-world evaluation of this pilot.

Working with Dorset ICB, SimComm Academy and Health Innovation Wessex the team have develop an inclusive, simulation-based workshop on 'Racial discrimination - what to recognise both in yourself and others'. A very successful workshop took place in February 2025 and there are plans to explore further workshops to improve inclusiveness.

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