

Accreditation standards review

Written submission form

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Nursing Informatics Australia and Health Informatics Society of Australia Submission

Midwifery Standards Review: ANMAC

The Health Informatics Society of Australia (HISA) and Nursing Informatics Australia (NIA) welcome this opportunity to provide input into the midwifery standards review. This submission is aimed at addressing question 9 only, whilst members are experienced midwives and educators we consider the preceding questions are better answered by experts in the field.

Question 9

It is our firm position that midwives need to be prepared to practise in the digital age. Any educational programme that fails to address the significant technological and data changes impacting on healthcare will offer limited ability to truly provide education pathways that will meet the needs of current and future midwives.

Specifically, we argue that:

- Clinical training of midwives as new entrants to the workforce is underpinned by a solid theoretical and practical foundation in data, information and analytics
- Capability in digital health is more than training in how to use particular tools or technologies. It requires development of competency where midwives are able to make deliberate choices by using and integrating knowledge, skills, judgement attitudes and personal values
- Direction and standardisation of the digital health content for accredited midwifery courses is needed

Digital transformation of healthcare as envisioned within Australia's National Digital Health Strategy [1] will be assisted by change management within the health workforce. In line with the Strategy's priority 6 "***a workforce confidently using digital health technologies to deliver health and care***" it is recommended we rethink how we educate midwives of the future to include:

- Demonstrating how to **evaluate the efficacy of digital health tools and services** and, where appropriate, use to enhance the care provided by midwives
- Embedding **digital-enabled innovation through all training pathways** – but in particular in university curricula
- Ensuring **digital health solutions are built on best practice guidelines** and designed to deliver benefits and improve outcomes of care
- Incorporating strong **foundations in clinical informatics and data analytics as core skills for midwifery** of the future
- Integrating of **digital health into national midwifery workforce accreditation** so that it is understood that the digital approach is now routine clinical practice

Clinical training of midwives as new entrants to the workforce needs to be underpinned by a **solid theoretical and practical foundation in data, information and analytics**. While data and information has always been the currency of healthcare, evaluation of trends and insights about disease, care management and women's experience across different populations have not been available through traditional documentation and research approaches. Skills in midwifery analytics are currently absent from curricula and need to be addressed as a matter of urgency if care is to reap the benefits of the increases in data enabled by digital health.

Within a digitally-enabled healthcare system midwifery inquiry will need to consider the explosion of data volume and diversity that will be available through multiple sources. Symptoms reported by women and signs confirmed by diagnostic tests will be complemented by other data sources, such as, devices and sensors worn by patients or embedded internally.

To be clear, digital transformation of healthcare does not simply mean the presence of technology peppered throughout healthcare facilities. Instead, it is making sense of your data, transforming data into information and being confident about its quality and security. Increasing awareness of the criticality of data for informed decisions and patient safety will reinforce what is critical to successful digital health.

While recording clinical notes does continue on paper, increasingly documenting electronically is becoming the norm. University programs in midwifery must be prepare graduands for hybrid methods of clinical documentation (paper and electronic) to ensure they transition easily into clinical practice. Moreover, the **sociotechnical aspects of digital work environments** need to be addressed. Lack of effective communication has long been identified as the major contributor to iatrogenic errors, and unfortunately, the introduction of technology can lead to new unintended consequences.

When considering the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) midwifery standards digital health can be related directly to standards 1.2, 1.6, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.4, 6.1, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 of the NMBA Midwife Standards for Practice [2]. However, within the draft of the ANMAC midwifery standards included in the consultation document the only statement or mention of relevance to digital health occurs in Standard 3: Program of Study section 3.4 "Teaching and learning articulates contemporary practices in midwifery health and education, and responds to emerging trends based on research, **technology** and other forms of evidence." [3] (P16) We consider this does not adequately address the importance of digital health in contemporary midwifery and healthcare more generally.

We consider this submission contributes to the aim of this review to develop a revised set of standards that are:

- contemporary and aligned with emerging research, policy and relevant industry guidance
- able to ensure midwives are suitably educated and qualified to practice in a competent and ethical manner to the required NMBA Midwife Standards for Practice
- acceptable to the profession and relevant stakeholders
- able to support continuous development of a flexible, responsive and sustainable Australian health workforce
- supportive of innovation in the education of health practitioners acceptable to the community in supporting safe, accessible and quality care.

References

1. Australian Digital Health Agency, *Australia's National Digital Health Strategy - Safe, Seamless and Secure: evolving health and care to meet the needs of modern Australia*. 2016, Australian Government.
2. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, *Midwife standards for practice 2018*, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia: Australia.
3. ANMAC, *Review of Midwifery Accreditation Standards: Consultation Paper 2*, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council, Editor. 2019.