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AUCKLAND DOMICILIARY MIDWIFE UP-DATE.

MAY 1987

Our numbers continue to increase - Mary Hammonds (East Auckland) and Jenny Woodley (South Auckland) have joined our ranks. Janet Thomas and Ruth Nicholson are in the process of registering with the Health Department.

Heather Waugh is having a baby in June. Yvette Watson is opting out for a year, planning to work at Waitakere three days a week and only doing home births for friends - while her two children are small. Rhonda Evans is also opting out for a year. She will continue to look after Centrepointhome births and meanwhile will manage Centrepointh's hat factory. (It's not true that she plans to become a mad hatter!) Adele Burkbeck transferred her Dunedin registration to Auckland but it is expected that Dr Vincent will have his birth centre operational soon and she will take charge of that.

Carolyn Young, Sian Burgess, Veronika Muller (in her third and final year of a Naturopathic course) and I are plodding on as usual. Heather and now Ruth have been/are working as practice nurse for Alison Copland, one of our home birth doctors. Mary will be working part time for Di Nash.

We continue to have quarterly meetings with our PPHNs and our relations are cordial, especially with Carol Petersen, Auckland PPHN. We were issued with instructions and consent forms for hepatitis B immunisation of newborn babes - also with mini chilly bins for transport of serum. Dr Peter Wong of the Health Department gave us the Departmental stance while we put him through the third degree! He admitted that babies could suffer from elevated temperatures, could be unsettled; that most cases were asymptomatic and that the long term effects could be cancer/chirrosis of the liver (same as from consumption of too much alcohol).

We also have quarterly meetings with our home birth doctors. We find these valuable - we share our problems and concerns and have established pretty good lines of communication. This is especially good when we are under attack, which we frequently are at present - now that the OSRC are getting rather nasty. Di will be telling you about this.

Relations with the hospitals improve and are now pretty good. This is due to the recognition of the power of the consumer, a cautious response to the political clout of the HBA and a changing attitude among midwives who are more receptive to home births and domiciliary midwives. When Thames published the 'Minimal Standards of Patient Care' for Domiciliary Deliveries, I took a copy to the Auckland Branch Midwives Section Executive meeting. This was passed on to the National Executive which wrote to Thames Obstetric Advisory Committee advising it that the document was an insult to women and to midwives! The National Executive of Midwives Section has prepared a Code of Standards and of Practice for Midwives. It will be presented to the Nursing Council for approval and this is seen as an important first step on the long road back to autonomy, as well as a unifying force for all midwives. Since its abortive attempt to impose the 'draft guidelines' and the repeal of the 1975 Obstetric Regulations while the 1986 Obstetric Regulations places hospital midwives under medical supervision and leaves domiciliary midwives out on a limb, the Health Department has been anxious to formulate some standards for us. At the moment, Carol is prepared to await completion of these Codes.

UPDATE / 2

Last year at the Midwives Conference in Christchurch (Sept), I presented a paper on The Status & Role of the Domiciliary Midwife. Maureen Lawton who was there as a representative of NZNA Executive (eg, a spy) wrote a 'secret' report on the Conference in which she made reference to my paper, saying I "was probably the most provocative of all speakers....some criticisms and accusations being levelled at the National Executive and probably caused more trauma to the apparent acceptance of the Association by the audience than any other happening in the three days." She claimed that "the off-side lobbying" she undertook in every break was exhausting but helpful. Michael Pye who passed on Maureen's report and also that of Lorraine Syvier to Sarah Hodgetts said he "nearly lost his fucking job", as a result.

Our public relations roles have been extended from piloting ADN students through their home birth follow-ups to taking out the comprehensive nurses doing their obstetric component. Heather has spoken at Manukau Tech. I have spoken about domiciliary midwifery at the Auckland Branch Midwives Section general meeting, also to St Helens medical staff on home births.

Professor Peggy Ann Field, NERF Travelling Scholar will be in Auckland 15 - 18 June. The Midwives Section is organising the workshops there. Prof Field from University of Alberta has degrees in midwifery and Maternal & Infant nursing. The Section is also heavily involved in contributing to the programme. Aileen Coppock and I are providing 'perspectives' to Field's Implications for Pain Management in Labour - Aileen on active birth and I on acupuncture.