Enabling new graduate midwives to work in midwifery continuity of care models in Australia

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

______________________________
Allison Cummins

Date: 14 December 2016
Acknowledgements

I began this journey many years ago working in a hospital that introduced widespread midwifery continuity of care to women. At the time it seemed the best way for new graduates to transition from a student to a midwife was to be working in woman centred care models. I had the opportunity to work alongside some of these transitioning midwives. I want to thank those young midwives and the manager at the time, Jan White, as the experience of working with those midwives inspired me to undertake this research.

This research would not have been made possible without the enthusiasm of a new group of newly graduated midwives who participated in this research. I would like to thank those new graduate midwives. Their responsiveness included referring me onto other new graduate midwives working in midwifery continuity of care when the scarcity of these recruits became clear to me. I felt privileged to have the opportunity to hear your stories and share in your journey. I am also very grateful to the managers, educators, clinical support midwives and clinical midwifery specialists who took time out of their hectic schedules to discuss with me the facilitators and barriers to employing and supporting new graduate midwives in a system that remains medically dominated and risk averse.

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Publications and presentations from this research

Conference presentations:
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  - Poster presentation - Facilitating new graduate midwives in midwifery continuity of care Models

Australian Centre for Perinatal Science, 2014, University of New South Wales
  - Poster presentation - What are the experiences of new graduate midwives working in midwifery continuity of care models?

International Confederation of Midwives, 2015, Asia Pacific region conference, Japan
  - Oral presentation - What are the experiences of new graduate midwives working in midwifery continuity of care models?

Nurse Education today and Nurse Education in Practice (NETNEP), 2016, Brisbane
  - The mentoring experiences of new graduate midwives working in midwifery continuity of care models in Australia.

Accepted for presentation:

11th International Normal Labour and Birth conference, 2016, Western Sydney University
  - Oral presentation – What are the experiences of new graduate midwives working in midwifery continuity of care models?
  - Poster presentation – The challenges of employing new graduate midwives in midwifery group practice in hospitals.

31st ICM Triennial Congress, 2017, Toronto, Canada
  - Oral presentation – What are the experiences of new graduate midwives working in midwifery continuity of care models?
  - Poster presentation – The challenges of employing new graduate midwives in midwifery group practice in hospitals.

Publications

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Abstract
Enabling New Graduate Midwives to work in Midwifery Continuity of Care Models in Australia

Background
Midwifery continuity of care is care provided to a woman throughout pregnancy, birth and the early parenting period, from one midwife or a small group of midwives. Midwifery continuity of care is considered the gold standard of care for women - they will experience less obstetric intervention and higher levels of satisfaction with their birth experience. Newly graduated midwives are ideally placed to work in these models, especially as in Australia they have had continuity of care opportunities through their education. However, there are limited opportunities in Australia for new graduate midwives to work in midwifery continuity of care and the literature focuses on new graduate midwives working in standard hospital transition to professional practice programs without midwifery continuity of care. This study was interested in exploring where midwifery continuity of care was available for new graduates, their experiences and how this might be expanded across the country.

Aims
The aim of the research was to:
1. Explore the experiences of new graduate midwives who work in midwifery continuity of care models in Australia.
2. Explore the facilitators and barriers to employing and supporting new graduate midwives working in midwifery continuity of care models.

Methods
This research was conducted in two phases. Phase one explored the experiences of new graduate midwives working in midwifery continuity of care models. Phase two explored the facilitators and barriers to employing new graduate midwives in midwifery continuity of care models. A qualitative study was undertaken. Data were collected through face-to-face, phone and Skype interviews. A thematic analysis was undertaken and the theories of continuity of care and the diffusion of innovation were used to further analyse the data. The study was set in Australia.
Results
The new graduate midwives built trusting relationships with the women, consolidating skills through knowing the women. They built trusting relationships with the small group of midwives they worked alongside and this provided the new graduates with a high level of support. The barriers to employing new graduate midwives in midwifery continuity of care models were overcome by visionary leaders.

Conclusions
The findings provide unique insights into the experiences of new graduate midwives who work in midwifery continuity of care models and the challenges of employing them into the models. New graduate midwives are prepared and feel supported to work in midwifery continuity of care models. Managers and other key stakeholders provide high levels of support to new graduate midwives working in the models. This research provides a conceptual model that identifies the essential elements to enabling new graduate midwives to work in midwifery continuity of care models.