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To : Hong Kong Midwives Association

Report of attending the 28th Congress of the ICM 2008 1st to 5th June 2008

It is my great pleasure to have attended the ICM 2008 in Glasgow. The journey has been long and presenting my research result in front of people coming from different parts of the world has been challenging. But the scientific programs within the 5-day conference have been proven to be stimulating to me. My presentation obtained a positive feedback from overseas midwives counterparts. I feel really encouraging and supportive. In future, I hope more Hong Kong midwives can attend the conference and enjoy a fruitful experience there. This congress was focused on 'Midwifery: a worldwide commitment to women and the newborn' and has translated this theme into an exciting scientific and professional programme.

The first day theme was focused on women's voices. I was shock to know that there were many cries, not only voices that were unheard. Many of them were asylum seekers and refugees. The basic human right to breastfeed was denied. This recalled my memory of the influx of Vietnamese refugees in HK in around 1980's to early 1990's. Vietnamese mothers' requests were always neglected. Nevertheless, we have been improving a lot and have followed the world trend: to respect women's culture and their needs.

The second day's theme was to introduce the appropriate use of reproductive and birth technology in maternal and newborn health. I was privileged to be assigned to present my paper under this theme. My topic is 'Can perineum length predict perineal outcome in normal vaginal delivery?' I hope my result will cultivate some decision making seeds for midwives before they perform episiotomy for women.

Strengthening midwifery and health promotion were the 3rd and 4th themes in the conference. To support women through normal birth is a very hard work. Professor Cathy Warwick emphasized that midwives should give support to each other. This is crucial if we want to strengthen our profession. I think this has been a big target that we have been longing to achieve. It is disappointing to see horizontal conflicts exist among midwives who work in different places. Breastfeeding, again is an everlasting benefits to improve infant survival especially in developing countries. This is an important strategy to promote health in newborns.

In summary, having attended the conference became one of my positive career experiences. I further broadened my vision in midwifery as it came to my added knowledge that there are many disadvantaged groups still suffering from substandard services. Empathy and caring are elements of our profession. Besides, we need to pursue new knowledge and skills in order to strengthen our midwifery practice. I hope HK midwives can demonstrate our perseverance and flexibility as to strive to improve midwifery care in future.