

Maternity research

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Associate Dean RKE
NIHR Senior Investigator

Red Rose Research event
University of Lancashire Burnley
Nov 19th 2025

With thanks to all those who gave permission
for the use of their photographs



University of
Lancashire

Maternity research across the NW



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Maternity research

Safe
Personal
Effective



NHS
East Lancashire Hospitals
NHS Trust
A University Teaching Trust

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Women and children's health research team



wave symbol - skip navigation to main content

Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust

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Maternity Research, University of Lancashire

Salutogenic focus

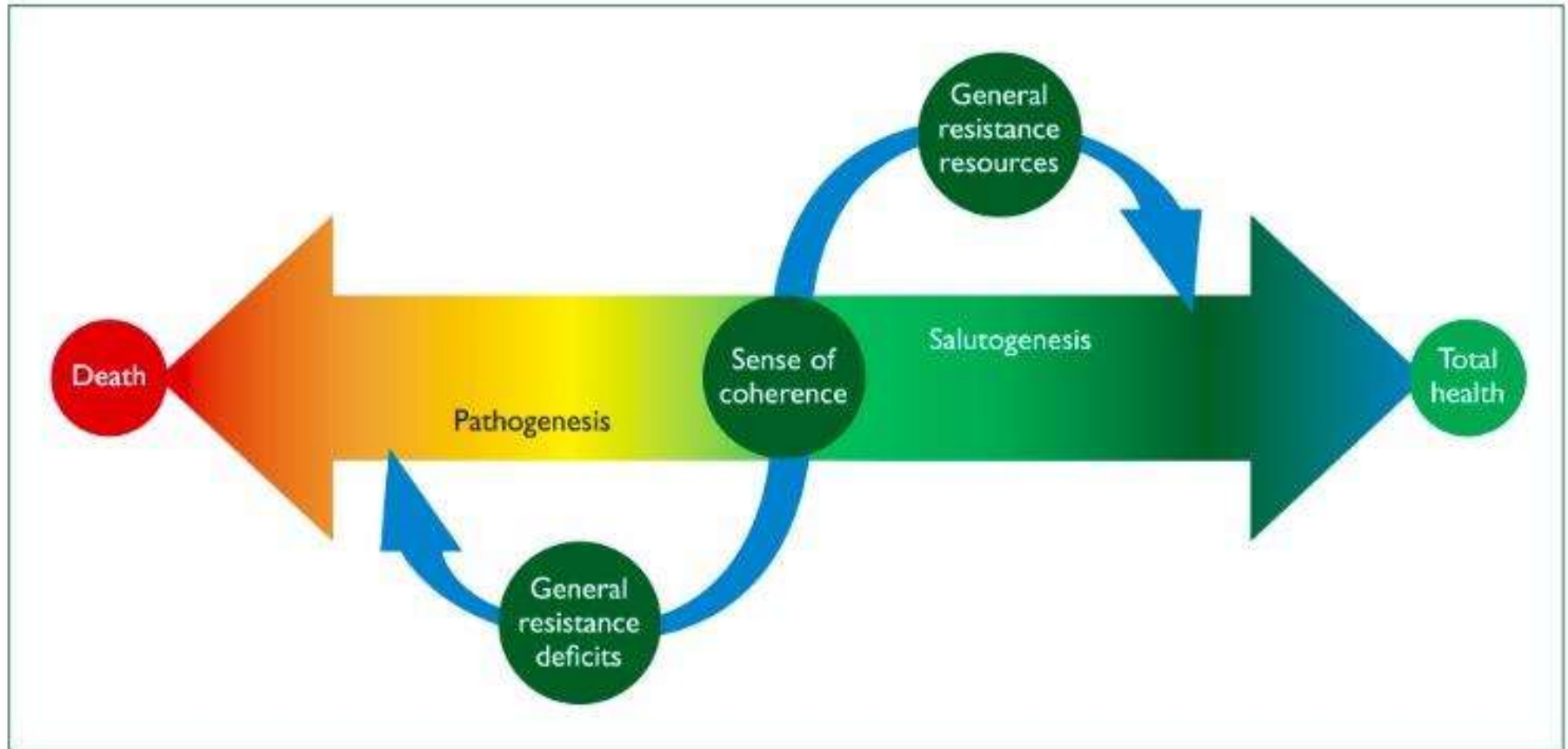


Figure 1. Depiction of the movement of sense of coherence along the health continuum in relation to general resistance resources versus general resistance deficits

Sense of Coherence

Comprehensible

Life is structured,
predictable and
explainable

It makes
sense to me

Manageable

Personal and
external resources
are available

I have
what it takes
to do this

Meaningful

Fits with sense of
self

It's worth it!

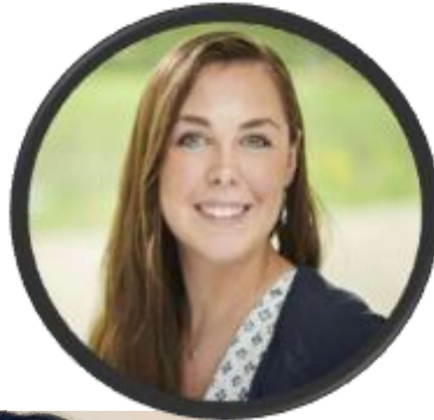
Some funding sources 2018-25



Economic
and Social
Research Council



The REACH team



Key themes

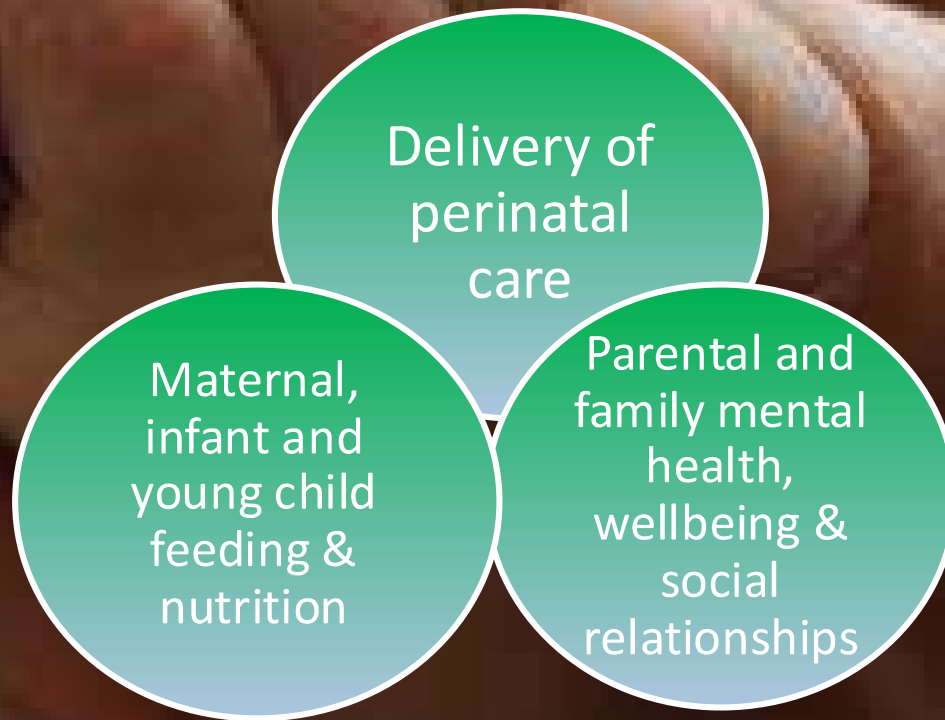
- *The nature of and optimal conditions and contexts for physiological maternity* (including environment and relationships)
- *Women's views and experiences of maternity care*
- *Methodological and theoretical innovation* (particularly in qualitative research, salutogenesis, complexity, social and digital media, and thermal imaging/biomechanics)



The MAINN team



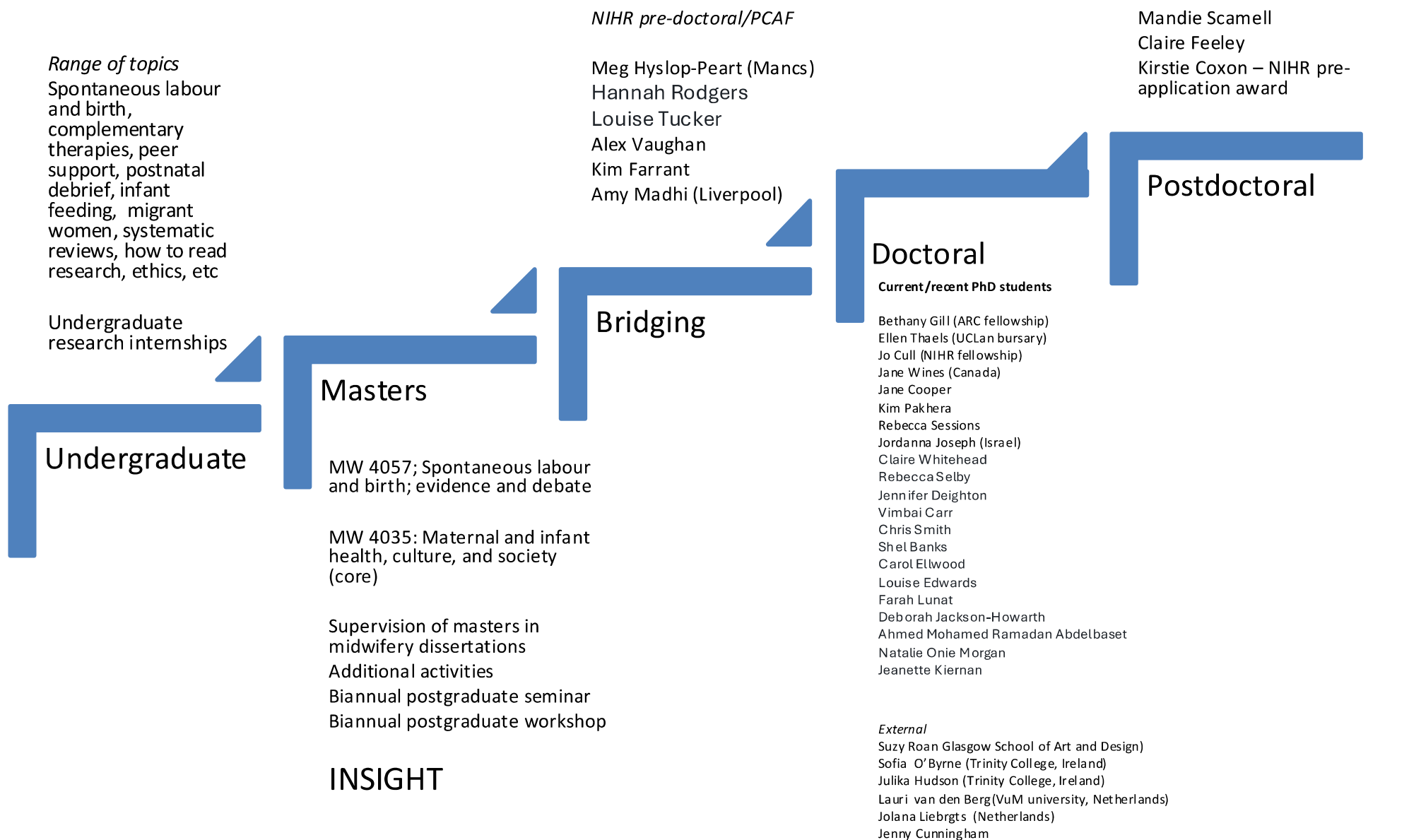
Key research areas/priorities....



Range and scope of activity (examples)

- Capacity building (*Internships, PCAF, Doctoral, post Doctoral, ongoing mentorship*)
- Technical developments (*Thermal imaging, biomechanics*)
- Interventions (*SHIP Trial, GBS3, ABBAfeed*)
- Health Services Research (*ASPIRE, Beacon Sites, Peer support, Postnatal debriefing, Antenatal education*)
- Evaluation (*UNICEF Baby Friendly, Best Beginnings*)
- Implementation (*C-Safe*)
- International (*Babies Born Better surveys (B3), WHO reviews, Gates ReJudge, Abseen Foundation work, EU COST networks*)
- NGO activity (*IMBCO/ICI, Abseen, White Ribbon UK, East meets West*)
- International conferences (*ReaCH, MAINN*)
- National and international networks (*NIHR CAG, QMNC, IMBCO, ICI, International Migration Research Network, SCENE neonatal network, NIHR Women and Girls CAG, NW Infant Feeding group, NW maternity research group & etc*)

Building the research pipeline



CHERISH

*developing a
physiological labour and
birth bundle*

Joint leads: Mandie Scamell, City
University, Soo Downe, University of
Lancashire

NIHR programme development
grant

With thanks
to Zebra
midwives for
the image



GBS 3 trial

Leads Profs Jane Daniels and Kate Walker, University of Nottingham.

Co-app Soo Downe University of Lancashire

Funder: NIHR HTA



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CLINICAL
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Beacon Sites

a Safety I/Safety II approach



Joint leads: Claire Feeley, Kings College
London, Soo Downe, University of
Lancashire
Jan 2024 -2026

NIHR programme development grant

With thanks
to Zebra
midwives for
the image



Refugees, migration and experts by experience: Research and creativity Marie-Claire Balaam

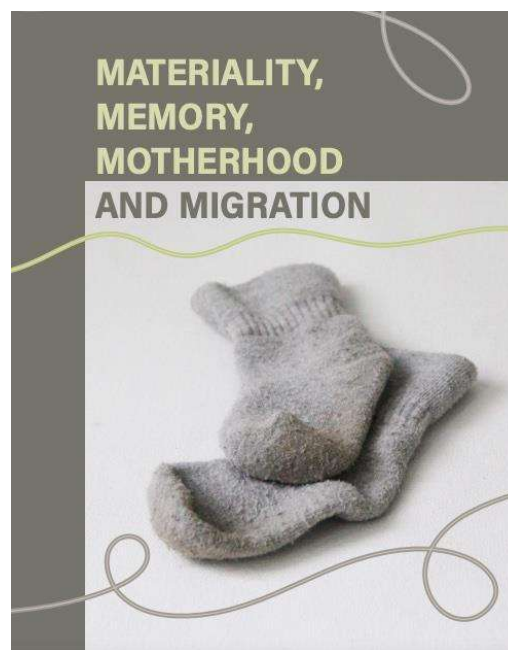


Wellbeing and health research in the arts, humanities, and social sciences

Thinking through things: sharing stories of mothers and motherhood told through everyday objects and belongings

First Shoes: Worn Stories Exhibition (2015), photography Alex Hurst.

Pl: Marie-Claire Balaam: Research Associate, Research in Childbirth & Health (ReaCH unit), School of Nursing and Midwifery,
Dr Carole Hunt: Senior Lecturer, MA Surface Pattern & Textiles/Critical Studies in Fashion and Textiles, School of Arts & Media



Presentation Title: **Materiality, Memory, Motherhood and Migration**



A_12a, Little Red Dress (2023)
Photography, Kate Egglestone-Wirtz



L_31, Hair Pockets (2023)
Photography, Kate Egglestone-Wirtz



Experts by Experience

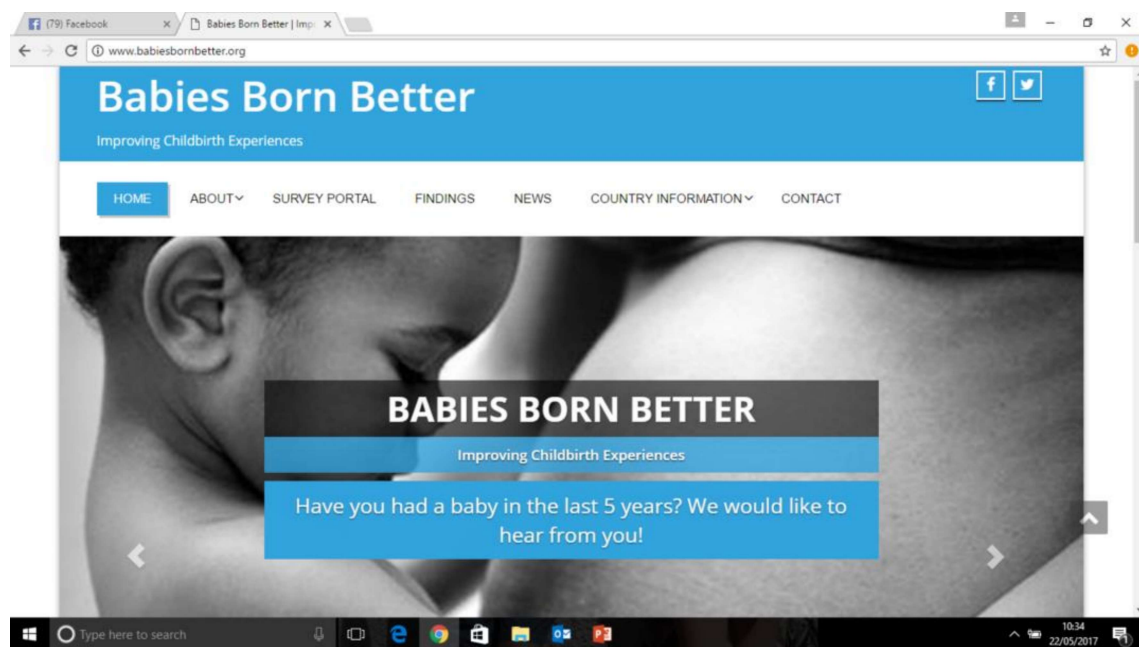
Education Session September 2023

Babies Born Better (B3)

Total responses (3 versions)

Over 110,000 responses, 100 countries, 26 languages

To date 20 papers + MSc + PhD studies from data
Open Access data set



ORIGINAL ARTICLE [Open Access](#)

“Make it better for the women and babies who come after me”: Findings from women in Australia completing the international Babies Born Better survey

Kate Young PhD Yvette D. Miller BA(Psych) (Hons), PhD

First published: 25 August 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/birt.12762>



Midwifery

Available online 30 August 2023, 103810
In Press, Journal Pre-proof What's this?



What influences women's experiences of childbirth in Flanders? – A quantitative cross-sectional analysis of the Babies Born Better Survey

Ellen Thaela^a , Hanne Meermans^b, Katrien Beeckman^{b c}

Exploring mothers' experiences of perinatal care in Cyprus: Babies Born Better survey

E. Hadji Georgiou , M. Andreaki, I. Koliandri, A. Spyridou, M. C. Balaam & A. Christoforou

BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth **23**, Article number: 487 (2023) | [Cite this article](#)

646 Accesses | 1 Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

C-Safe

Lead Shakila Thangaratinam, U Liverpool

Soo Downe, Carol Kingdon, Jenni Kuroski U Lancashire

Funder, MRC: Sept 2022-Aug 2027



C-Safe Project | India & Tanzania

Ensuring Safe and Appropriate Caesarean Sections



Expected impact

The C-Safe project achieves improved maternal and newborn outcomes as a result of:

1

Promoting safe and respectful care in labor resulting in vaginal births, including safe birth with instruments

2

Ensuring caesarean sections are done for the right reasons

3

Improving the safety of caesarean sections

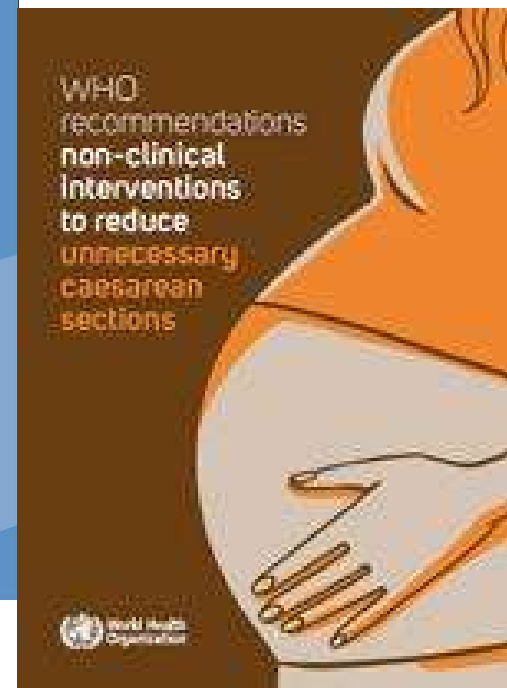
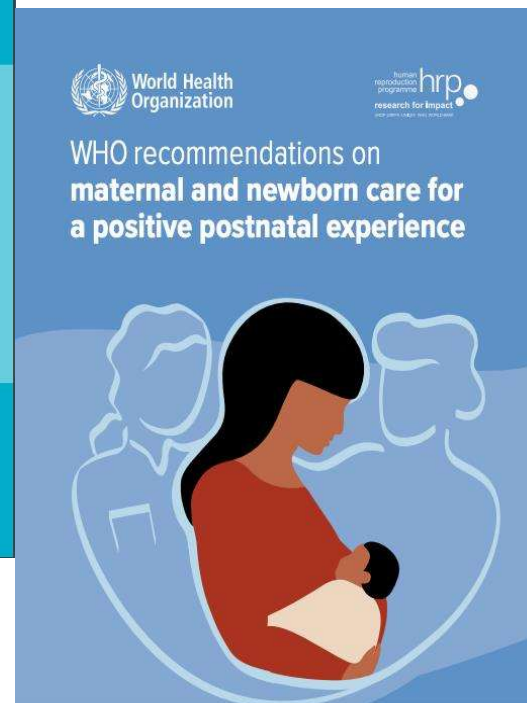
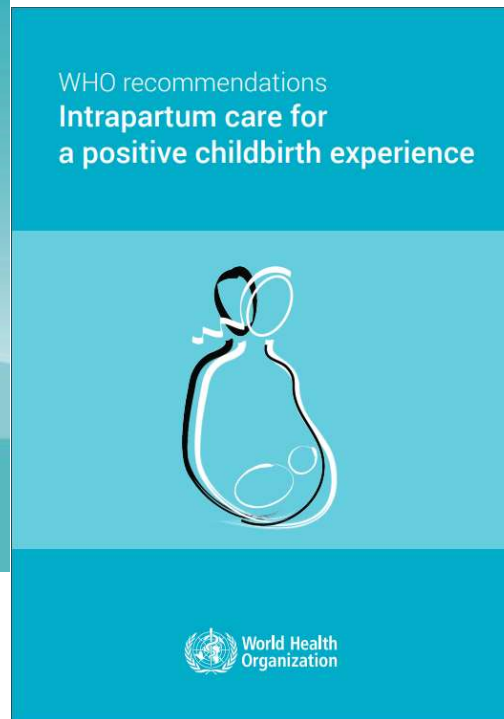
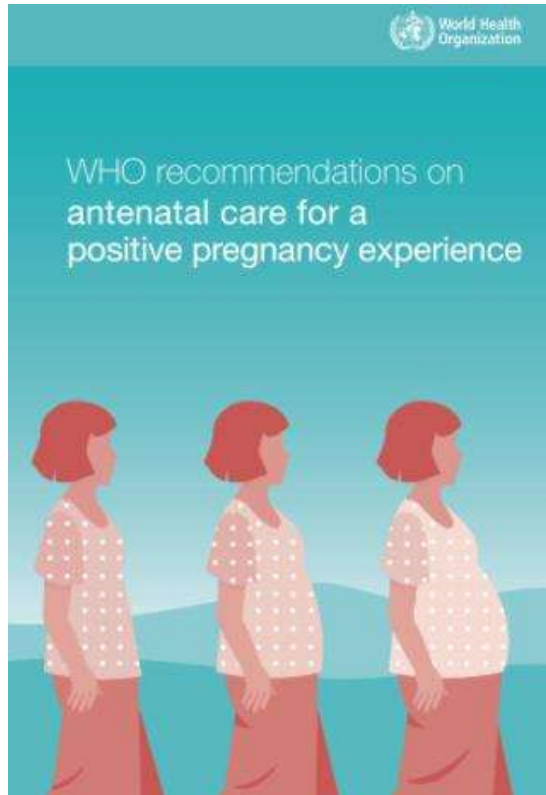
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Generating evidence that can help inform programming and be scaled



WHO reviews

Kenny Finlayson, Soo Downe et al



Qualitative Systematic Reviews to inform WHO Guidelines on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) during pregnancy and childbirth

Series of qualitative systematic reviews exploring women's experiences of:-

- 1) Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemia (2023-24)**
- 2) Diabetes Mellitus (2024-25)**
- 3) Cardiovascular Diseases (2025-26)**
- 4) Respiratory Diseases (2026-27)**
- 5) Mental Health (2028)**

[All likely to include views of health professionals as well]

- Supported by empirical work looking at women's experiences of the above conditions via a series of webinars and focus groups (facilitated by the WHO)
- Protocol for reviews (1-4) published with PROSPERO (2024)



NIHR NW ARC 2 Womens Health theme

Lead Shakila Thangaratinam, U Liverpool

Co lead Kirstie Coxon U Lancashire



The 15 ARCs



And: Capacity Building lead:
Caroline Watkins University of Lancashire

ATTUNE Study: Assessing The evidence and impact of the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative

Gill Thomson, Victoria Moran, Nicola Crossland, Lucy Hives



Assessing for jaundice in community settings

Gill Thomson, Victoria
Moran, Nicola Crossland,
Lucy Hives

Funded by NHS Race
Health Observatory –
systematic review,
surveys and interviews





CORALS birth reflections service

Gill Thomson, Victoria
Moran, Nicola
Crossland, Lucy Hives

- Systematic review
- Consultations
- Co-production
- Waiting to implement and evaluate a new service model in East Lancashire

Developing and evaluation of psychoeducation resources – birth trauma, perinatal loss, tokophobia

Gill Thomson



Developing digital
resources to upskill and
develop confidence in
managing

Birth trauma, perinatal loss,
tokophobia

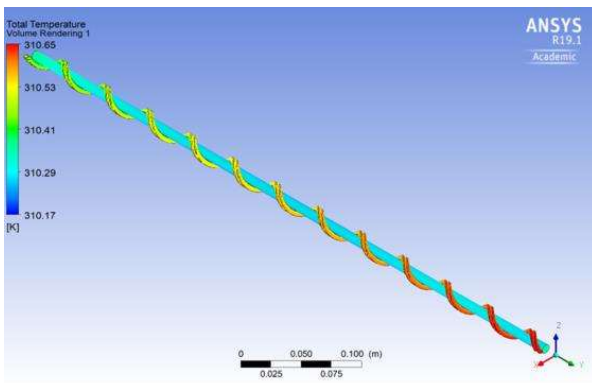
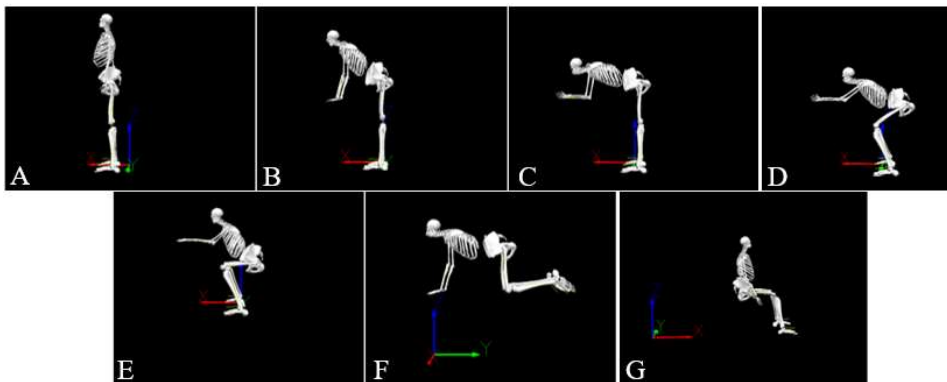
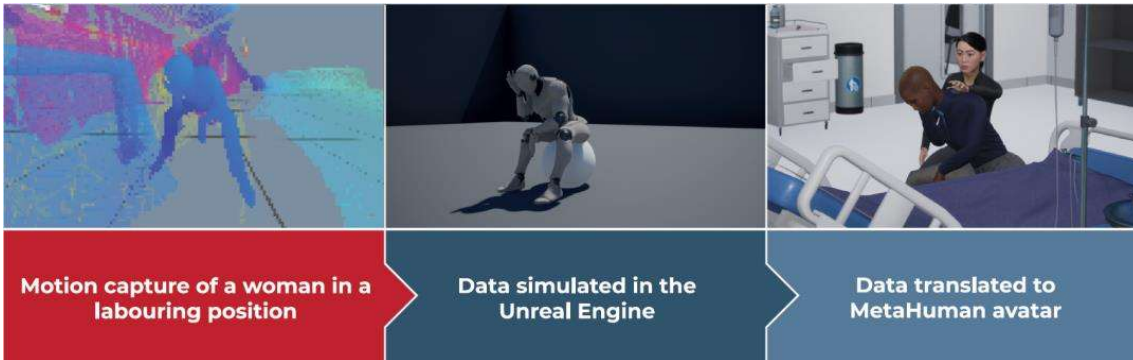
Leaving No- One Behind



- Funded by Wellcome – Professor Doris Schroeder (PI)
- Developing new practices and thinking around engaging vulnerable populations in research

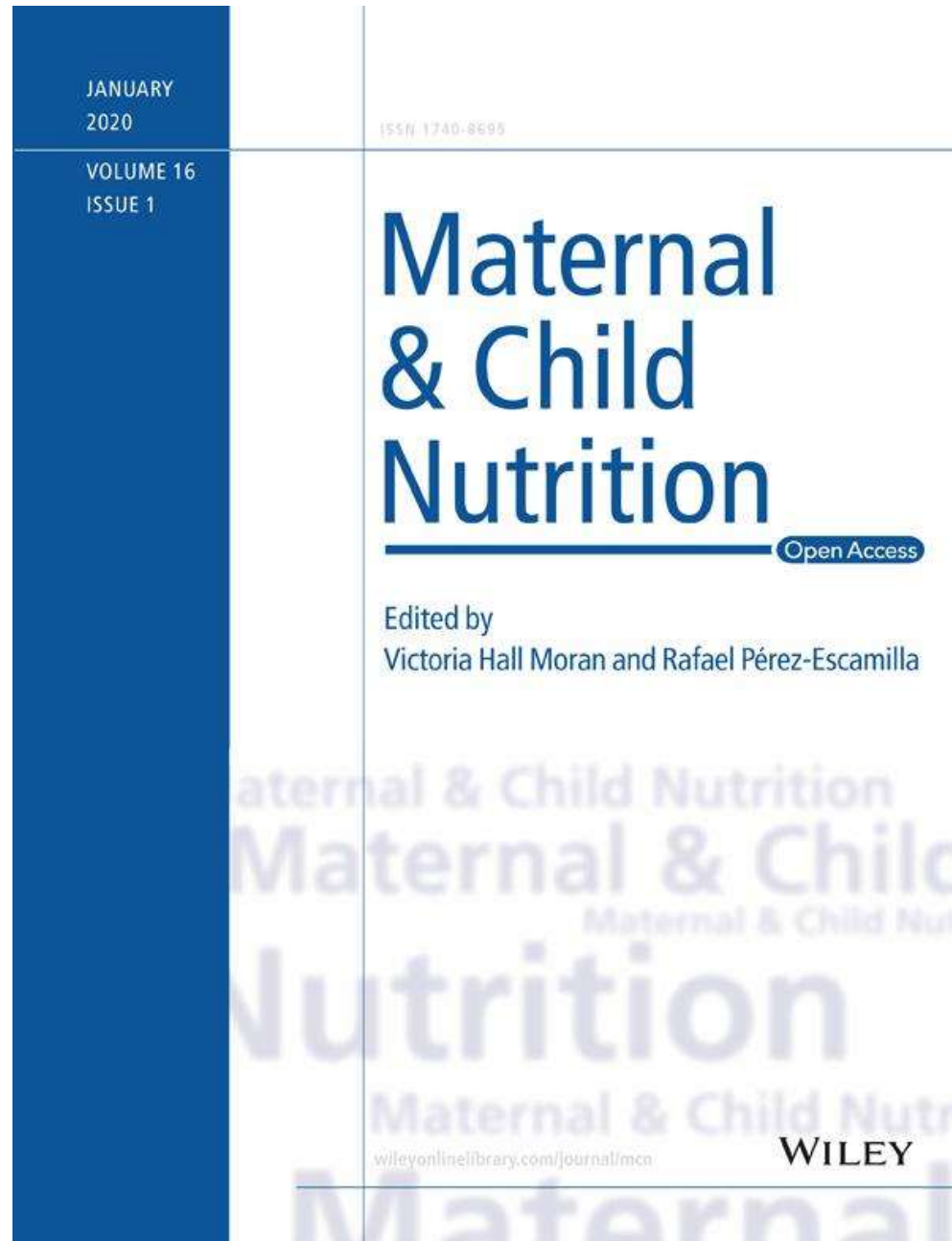
Thermal Imaging and Biomechanics

Anastasia Topalidou



Dr Victoria Moran

Top quartile (Q1) in
its field

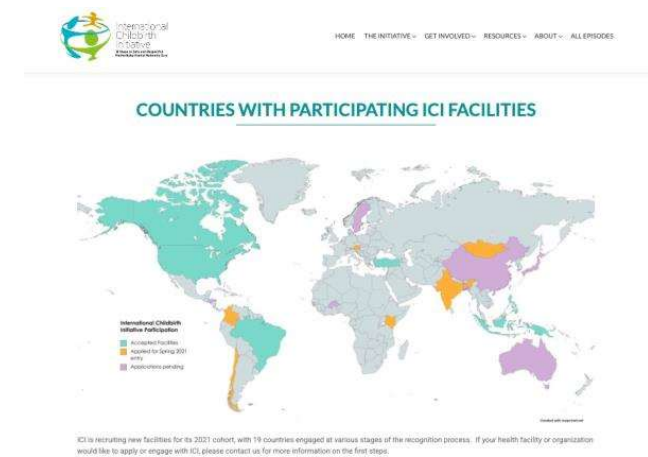




Improving the experience of pregnant and birthing women

New series offers strategies to end mistreatment and offer respectful maternal and newborn care

Hospital to community
Sickness to prevention
Analogue to digital



Global impacts

The future: Investment in precision risk assessment? Minimising Too Little Too Late, Too Much Too Soon

Eriksen et al 2023



The use of maternal smart ring-derived physiological data in the third-trimester may improve prediction of the natural duration of pregnancy relative to the EDD.



The most influential projects are not necessarily the most expensive

BABIES BORN BETTER

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BABIES BORN BETTER

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS SURVEY?

We are doing this study to find out about women's labour and birth experiences in a number of different countries worldwide. Your answers will help us to compare what women and birthing people think about care during birth in different countries. We hope to use the survey results to find out about what women think works well, and to use that information to improve care in the future.

English (United States) Accessibility: Investigate

Notes Comments

The ultimate aim:
Optimising positive experiences and outcomes
for ALL in the short AND longer term



With thanks to Zebra midwives for the image



Tracy Abney