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As the UK government is beginning to recognise, encouraging an increasing synergy between practice and research is essential to maximise the quality of care, and the development and retention of staff. The recent introduction of the Nuffield Fellowship awards in the UK is an indication of this intent. However, an very common theme in my teaching of research methods to undergraduate students is that of the 'researcher's dilemma' – the fact that many people who want to become midwives do not go on to do so. Many have worked for years to be able to get on to a midwifery course, and they are highly motivated in getting through that course, and into practice. Research seems to be a distant dream. Despite this, many of these same students who go on to practice find that they have an increasing number of questions that they would really like to have an answer to. Some of these emerge through clinical experience, and occur at some of the most interesting times in their lives, or at points and procedures that do not seem to have any sense to them, or for the women, babies and families they are attending. There are also some students who are curious about aspects of midwifery even during their training.

For student midwives, and for qualified staff who are beginning to look towards this possibility, there is a plethora of books relating advanced aspects of research, often with a focus on specific qualitative or quantitative techniques. For many of these books the research area for the first time, these books can be very dense and daunting. Areas like theoretical perspectives, phenomenology, sociology, and ethics are explored in a way that is not always helpful. This book, however, provides a clear, practical and accessible introduction to the whole spectrum of research in midwifery care. The authors have broken the process down into easy steps, and provided a clear overview of each step, with reassuringly familiar examples of how the knowledge they present might be applied in practice. For those just dipping their toes in the vast waters of research, this text provides easy access to the same. For those who are more familiar, there are insights to be gained from reading through the book. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did!

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