

Statement on Midwifery Led Ultrasound Basic Early Ultrasound - For Midwives

In September 2023, Te Tatau o te Whare Kahu | Midwifery Council decided that a Registered Midwife, who holds a current practising certificate issued by the Council, can perform ultrasound specific to **early pregnancy**, provided they have completed an endorsed education course and remain engaged in an ongoing credentialling programme, as outlined by the programme provider.

That means that early pregnancy ultrasound is now recognised within the Midwifery Scope of Practice. This change is intended to:

- allow midwives to perform basic early pregnancy ultrasound after completing an endorsed course;
- improve access for whānau to early ultrasound; and
- reduce pressure on demand for formal ultrasound in early pregnancy.

The endorsed education course aims to support midwives' core role and is not designed to replace a formal ultrasound performed by a sonographer. The basic level education programme has more limited components compared with the advanced level education programme.

Background

There are nationwide ultrasound access issues for whānau, coinciding with the abortion law reforms, which enable midwives to provide midwifery-led abortion care. Some whānau wait up to four weeks to confirm the gestation of pregnancy when seeking a termination of pregnancy. This prolongs the pregnancy and complicates the termination process, both physically and emotionally.

There are also significant inequities accessing ultrasound, due to multiple barriers. Enabling midwives to perform early ultrasounds would help to reduce many of those barriers. Upskilling the midwifery workforce will help to reduce the pressure on community ultrasound services.

Education

Te Tatau o te Whare Kahu | Midwifery Council has endorsed the education programme CAHPU Basic Early Pregnancy Assessment, which is currently delivered by Australasian Society of Ultrasound In Medicine (ASUM). ASUM supports ultrasound users, both in New Zealand and Australia and offers Ultrasound credentials for allied health professionals, including obstetric units.

The learning outcomes and requirements are documented in the ASUM syllabus. Key outcomes on the successful completion of this education programme are:

- demonstrate an understanding of the relevant anatomy and organ systems
- demonstrate the ability to effectively perform early pregnancy imaging
- confirm intrauterine pregnancy
- confirm viability of pregnancy
- identify and assess pelvic free fluid, clot, and bleeding/haemorrhage
- understand the limitations of ultrasound of organ system in diagnosis of early pregnancy problems
- write a structured report or complete a pro forma report for early pregnancy assessment
- have the clinical knowledge and ultrasound skill to be able to make appropriate management decisions according to the clinical situation
- understand the requirement for urgent formal scan and senior medical input in certain settings

Midwives wishing to perform ultrasound specific to early pregnancy need to have successfully completed that education programme prior to carrying out basic early pregnancy ultrasound.

Any subsequent training providers will require endorsement by Te Tatau o te Whare Kahu | Midwifery Council.

Requirements

You will need to have a qualified sonographer or sonologist prepared to supervise you, in collaboration with an experienced midwife, to ensure the clinical component of the education programme can be completed.

If you would like any further information, please contact us at: education@midwiferycouncil.health.nz

Ngā mihi,



Lesley Clarke

Tumu Whakahaera | Chief Executive