

## Shigeko Horiuchi Speech

On behalf of the midwifery group of St Luke's International University Tokyo, I would like to extend a congratulation to all the students, faculty members of Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences. I am sure it has been a challenging process to establish the graduate course of midwifery at Tanzania's MUHAS. Opening this midwifery program graduate course will allow many women to receive a higher standard of maternal care. I am very pleased to see when new midwifery graduate courses are established. As one professional who is engaged in the medical and health sciences, I believe that it is very important for us to strive for further improvement in the quality of care in clinical practice.

Although Japan is far from here and has very different culture, climate, language, economy, society and medical health welfare system from the ones in Tanzania, there are also many things in common, particularly our desire for good health for themselves and their family. A midwife's responsibility is to ensure the health of women and newborn children - this professional goal is the universal.

Why should nursing or medical personnel continue to study after basic undergraduate training? And why do midwives want to discover new research evidence or advanced levels of knowledge?

One reason is a sense of professional duty.

Another reason is the joy of learning.

Let me explain some aspects of these two reasons for continuing education and need for evidence-based knowledge.

First, Professional Duty. Scientific knowledge is constantly advancing and being updated. Midwifery is also an academic field in the sciences, and we need to build up new research evidence and improve the standard of care based on the research.

Continuing education is needed in order to advance scientific knowledge, not only about physiological aspects but also psychosocial aspects of care. I think in the past poor educational experiences caused some midwives' narrow view and very conservative attitude. Education has the power to enhance critical thinking, problem solving, more effective management and ability to make

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changes. And we must never forget our social responsibility for people-centered care.

We can help society to be aware of the capabilities of our profession by informing public about the quality of education for medical and midwifery personnel. Everybody should have the opportunity to pursue further training and education after they receive their midwifery licence.

Second, the Joy of Learning. Let me tell you a story about a woman who always maintained a stoic expression and never said anything about her needs. She had 3 children and her physical condition was not so good. Shortly after a spontaneous abortion, she got pregnant again. A midwife recommended her avoiding any further pregnancies and instructed her about contraception methods. But the woman did not listen. She believed that her husband's opinion was perfect and only his opinion mattered to her.

The midwife observed that the woman's showed signs of depression. The midwife was frustrated because the woman made no attempt to change her lifestyle. Because the midwife did not learn fully about her client's condition, the midwife scolded her repeatedly and wanted to ignore this woman who clearly needed help.

Then the midwife had the opportunity to learn about the Domestic Violence Theory, and she decided to try to change her approach to the client. There is a mass of research evidence that domestic violence renders the victims powerless. Being powerless is not the victim's fault. The unhealthy power dynamic involved is a factor contributing to physiological and psychological illness. The problem is not the client's indecisiveness, but the powerlessness caused by violence.

When the midwife applied her knowledge of domestic violence theory to her relationship with the client, she was able to respect the client's choices, relate to her with compassion and without ignoring her or being frustrated. She was able to not give instructions as though from a superior position, and was able to patiently listen to what the client had to say.

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There is a Japanese proverb: "The boughs that bear most hang lowest". To me this means that those who are most productive and knowledgeable may also be those who are the most unassuming and least pretentious.

Learning new things can be exciting and empowering. Gaining a wider perspective can make your life brighter. Through active learning midwives can gain deeper insights into their patients, a process that can be serendipity, a wonderful gift for midwives.

In conclusion I would like to sum up the meaning of learning for midwives. Ongoing learning is a professional responsibility in order to stay up to date with the best practice. To become an efficient and effective professional, more learning is required, and active learning will provide you greater professional satisfaction, a gift that I hope will never leave you.

I am a professor and teach students in university, but I am still a student and always thirsting for new knowledge. I am blessed to be able to have the opportunity to advance my own knowledge every year, and it is my fervent hope that establishment of this new graduate course of midwifery at Tanzania's MUHAS will enable you to continue to enhance your own knowledge and empower your professional careers, while providing higher standards of clinical care for your patients. I am very hopeful and excited for all of you.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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