PIRI

PARENT-INFANT RESEARCH INSTITUTE & INFANT CLINIC

JAN - JUNE 2011 NEWSLETTER

The First Online PND Treatment

PIRI has developed the first internet-based cognitive-behavioural treatment for postnatal depression (PND) – the *Mum Mood Booster* program.

This program was developed in collaboration with researchers and clinicians from the Oregon Research Institute and the University of Iowa in the United States, and is based on PIRI's evidence-based group treatment program for PND.

PIRI will be accepting referrals to a feasibility study of the Mum Mood Booster program from July 2011.

In Australia, around 40,000 women annually suffer from PND by the time their baby is three months old.

PND is accompanied by a range of disturbing symptoms at a time that is supposed to be joyous including depressed mood, loss of interest, sleep disturbance, lack of energy, feeling agitated or slowed down, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, changes in appetite, loss of concentration, and thoughts of death or suicide. High anxiety is often co-morbid.

Research has shown that symptoms of depression can be treated effectively through Internet interventions. However, to date, no internet-based treatments have been developed specifically for PND, despite the special needs of women who are depressed while caring for a new infant.

Due to time constraints and fear of stigma, many women with PND do not access help. Internet-based treatment for PND enables women to overcome these barriers to help-seeking by being more accessible than clinic-based treatments and providing anonymity.

We developed the Mum Mood Booster program over three years. We conducted focus groups and usability tests with postpartum women in both Australia and the United States to refine the program. The program is now ready to evaluate in a feasibility study, which includes six telephone calls from a personal coach.

Parent-Infant Research Institute

The Parent-Infant Research Institute (PIRI) is a vigorous & innovative Australian research institute focusing on understanding, developing and applying treatments to improve parent and infant well-being. PIRI believes that early intervention is the key to better outcomes for families.

While PIRI has a strong research focus, it also comprises a clinical unit (Infant Clinic). The Infant Clinic is a Centre of Excellence and provides clinical services to assist with the difficulties experienced by parents & infants in the first years of life.

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The First Online PND Treatment (cont.)

Inside the Mum Mood Booster Program…

The Mum Mood Booster program provides step-by-step guidance through six sessions structured to encourage optimal engagement and behaviour change. Initial steps of the program provide explicit direction whereas later steps encourage users to assume greater responsibility for managing their own plan for change. Each session begins by reviewing previous material prior to presenting new content and concepts. The program's charting function helps users see the relationship between mood and activity levels. Information from past sessions is used to reinforce gains made, to tailor subsequent program content, and to provide feedback.

Although users set their own pace, which is particularly important as women with PND are often overwhelmed by infant care, the program encourages the completion of one session per week. A printable summary describes key content covered in each session and a tailored list of recommended between-session practice activities.

The program also offers users unrestricted access to browse information presented in the form of library articles on different topics including stress management, communication skills, getting support, time management, problem solving, sleep and caring for baby, and nurturing the couple relationship.

In recognition of the important role of partners and paternal depression in the treatment of PND, we developed a free-standing **Partner Support Website** designed specifically for partners.

Advanced state-of-the-art technology tools allow interactive content, personalised feedback on progress, online videos of women who have successfully used the strategies taught, and an online forum. Interactive activities are central to the design to engage women.

Program Evaluation

We are conducting a feasibility study to evaluate the Mum Mood Booster program. We will be recruiting 25 women with PND symptoms to participate. An additional 25 women will participate in the United States. Participants in the study will receive the first opportunity to work through the Mum Mood Booster program. They will also receive weekly telephone calls from a psychologist for six weeks to monitor their progress. As part of the study, they will be asked to complete some questionnaires and assessments.

To participate in the study, women must be less than 9 months postpartum, over 18 years of age, have home access to the internet and personal email and not currently be receiving treatment for depression. For more information or to refer, please contact Dr Charlene Schembri on (03) 9496 4496 or charlene.schembri@austin.org.au.

News & Updates

Refresh Your Depression Screening Skills – Online Training from *beyondblue*

beyondblue, in collaboration with PIRI and Genesis Ed, have produced an online mental health training program for health professionals working with women in the perinatal period that is free to access.

The program - *'Beyond babyblues: Detecting and managing perinatal mental health disorders in primary care*' - is the first of its kind in Australia and is designed to provide health professionals - including midwives, GPs, obstetricians and maternal, child and family health care workers - with extra training and skills needed to better understand, detect, treat and manage mental health conditions.

Upon completion of the training program, GPs will receive a mental health skills training qualification from the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration and several other health professions will receive relevant recognition from their professional bodies.

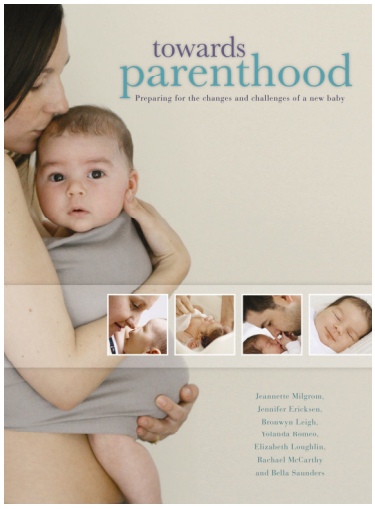
A major aim of the program is to further educate health professionals about the importance of including mental health care and screening in ante- and postnatal assessment, in an effort to maximise women's wellbeing during the perinatal period as well as the wellbeing of their infant, family and carers.

Further information about the online training can be found at: www.thinkgp.com.au/beyondblue

Towards Parenthood Book – First Print Sold

We are pleased to announce that our book '*Towards Parenthood: Preparing for the changes and challenges of a new baby*' is going into reprint.

PIRI is selling the book for $34.95. To purchase a copy, please contact us on (03) 9496 4496.



Infant Clinic Referrals Welcome

We currently have some openings for pregnant and postnatal women seeking individual counselling.

Treatment plans are individually tailored and include a range of approaches found to help antenatal and postnatal depression and anxiety, early parenting difficulties and infant adjustment.

For information and to make an appointment, please telephone (03) 9496 4496 and ask for the Infant Clinic intake worker.

Training Calendar for Health Professionals

25 – 26 August
Treating Postnatal Depression
A two-day workshop on the assessment and group treatment of postnatal depression. Presented by Prof Jeannette Milgrom, Ms Jennifer Ericksen and Dr Jo du Buisson.
Cost: $660 (incl. GST)

7 – 8 September
Overcoming Depression
A two-day workshop on an introductory program for health professionals starting to work with women with postnatal depression. Presented by Ms Jennifer Ericksen.
Cost: $660 (incl. GST)

27 October
Premature Babies & Their Parents
A half day workshop about understanding and resolving interactional difficulties of mothers and their premature infants. Presented by Dr Carol Newnham.
Cost: $220 (incl. GST)

10 November
Mother-Infant Interactions
A half day workshop on observing and assessing mother-infant interactions. Presented by Prof Jeannette Milgrom.
Cost: $220 (incl. GST)

For more information, please contact us on (03) 9496 4496 or piri@austin.org.au.

PIRI & Infant Clinic Team

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