

**MEDIA RELEASE****For immediate release: Monday 22 June 2009****Improving the emotional wellbeing of parents when bringing baby home**

Welcoming a new baby into the world can be both exciting and daunting for parents. Help has arrived for expecting parents looking for more information than they find in ante-natal classes.

**Towards Parenthood: Preparing for the changes and challenges of a new baby** (Jeannette Milgrom et al.), is the companion text to the highly successful Toward Parenthood Program developed at the Parent-Infant Research Institute (PIRI) at Austin Health. The team of psychologists at PIRI developed the text to help parents to prepare themselves for the emotional, social and psychological issues that arise during pregnancy and early parenthood.

It is a self-help workbook designed for expectant parents – both mums and dads. According to Jennifer Ericksen, Coordinator of the Infant Clinic at PIRI and co-author of **Towards Parenthood**, the program is ideally suited to work in conjunction with routine antenatal classes.

“We wanted to develop a psychological intervention, grounded in fact, that would enhance the bond between mothers and babies at a crucial, but sometimes difficult time,” says Ericksen. “The workbook is based on the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy, and each chapter includes a number of practical exercises and suggestions.”

The effectiveness of the book **Towards Parenthood** as a self-help program supported by weekly telephone calls was evaluated in two randomised controlled trials, funded by *beyond blue*. Health professionals offered counselling sessions to women and their partners after they had spent the week working through one chapter at a time of the book, at their own pace. The program was found to be effective in reducing parenting stress, depression and anxiety in the early postpartum period.

“As around 10 percent of women experience depression during pregnancy, this text has been developed to help all parents manage the complex demands of parenthood as well as assist those having a particular difficulty in their ability to cope and experiencing challenges in their partner relationship,” says Ericksen.

**Towards Parenthood** comprises nine chapters; eight deal with the antenatal period and the ninth chapter addresses the first weeks following baby’s birth. It is the emotional wellbeing of parents in this transitional stage – bringing baby home – which largely drives the program. **Towards Parenthood** aims to arm participants with the skills to cope beyond the reaches of established antenatal care. As Ericksen explains:

“The last antenatal chapter also includes practical material on caring for a newborn, but again with a psychological flavour – how to cope with what you’re feeling, discouraging negative self-talk, and so on. It is important to think about how you might manage before you are actually in the situation.”

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**Towards Parenthood: Preparing for the changes and challenges of a new baby**

by Jeannette Milgrom, Jennifer Ericksen, Bronwyn Leigh, Yolanda Romeo, Elizabeth Loughlin, Rachael McCarthy and Bella Saunders

will be launched by Rob Moodie, Professor of Global Health, Nossal Institute for Global Health, University of Melbourne & Chair, National Preventative Health Task Force  
Tuesday 23 June, 2009 at 10am  
Breakout Area, Education Precinct, Level 4, Austin Hospital Tower, Heidelberg

**All Media Welcome**

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A mother of twins who has completed this program is available for interview please contact Jennifer Ericksen (03) 9496 4496 [jennifer.ericksen@austin.org.au](mailto:jennifer.ericksen@austin.org.au)

**Towards Parenthood: Preparing for the changes and challenges of a new baby** is available from ACER Press.