

PARENT-INFANT RESEARCH INSTITUTE & INFANT CLINIC NEWSLETTER

July - September 2006



Improving access to help for women with perinatal depression

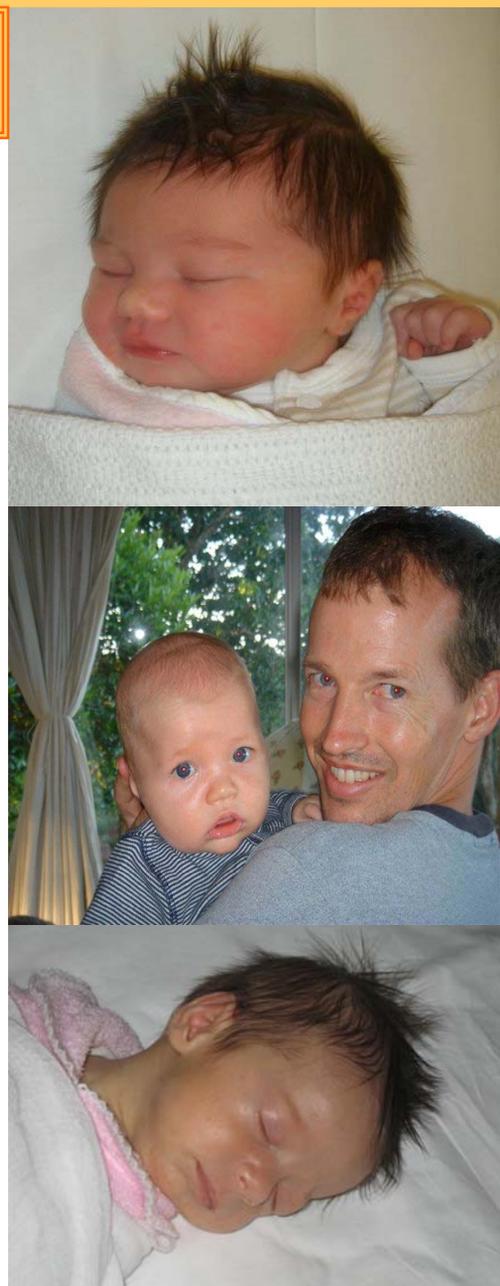
A series of focus groups with women who were currently accessing treatment for perinatal depression and/or anxiety have been completed. This *beyondblue* funded project has gained an in-depth understanding of how women with perinatal depression and anxiety access help. In addition, personal and community beliefs, attitudes and barriers that influence women help seeking were evaluated.

Women identified eight (8) key theme clusters:

- Coping & Failure;
- Lack of Knowledge;
- Fear, Stigma & Denial;
- Interpersonal Support;
- Baby Management;
- Expectations of Motherhood;
- Help-Seeking & Treatment Experiences and;
- Relationship with Health Professionals.

A number of recommendations and policy implementations were suggested based on the results of the focus groups. One key recommendation was to increase training to health professionals around awareness of prevailing attitudes in relation to perinatal emotional distress and approaches to dealing with maternal feelings of failure, guilt and stigma.

PIRI will be incorporating this material into a training session for health professionals for 2007. For further information, contact Jennie Ericksen on 9496 4496.



PIRI recently had a visit from Dr. Marina Catteneo, a clinical psychologist from Italy. Dr. Catteneo is currently establishing perinatal services for women including screening for depression and anxiety, providing information about how to identify depression and facilitating the Infant Clinic's 'Getting Ahead of Postnatal Depression Group Program'. Dr. Catteneo noted that perinatal services of this kind are sadly lacking in Italy. We wish Dr. Catteneo well in her venture to improve the mental health of women and babies. While our PND group program is running in Italy, they are also running here at Austin Health. The next group is due to start in a number of weeks - feel free to refer women who may be interested.

Models of Care Program

The Models of Care Program aims to evaluate three community-based treatment options for women with PND. This program has been running in the Banyule area since **November 2004**, with Whitehorse and Nillumbik areas having joined the program in **early 2006**. The three models of care being evaluated all incorporate GP-centred care, as follows:

- *Trained GP care only*
- *Trained GP care plus free counselling sessions with a trained MCHN*
- *Trained GP care plus free counselling sessions with a psychologist*

Results thus far:

- **62 women** have been randomised to receive treatment for postnatal depression
- Of the women who have completed treatment (**37 women**), nearly all have significantly improved in terms of depression severity and levels of parenting stress and more are currently receiving treatment.

What women say about the program:

“Thankyou for this opportunity - I have gained tools to deal with this in future, and our whole family has seen the benefits”

“Having received the treatment has definitely had a huge impact on my life for the positive.”

For more information, contact Project Co-ordinator Chris Holt on 9496 4493.

Welcome!

We welcome Dr Anne-Catherine Rolland to PIRI and the Infant Clinic. Anne-Catherine is a child psychiatrist from France who will work with us for one-year. She brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience and has a keen interest in the mental health of infants and premature babies. Anne-Catherine is working on a number of our research projects and will be working with mothers and babies through the Infant Clinic.

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Parent-Infant Initiative

The Parent-Infant Mental Health Initiative (PIMHI) has been funded by DHS to:

- Increase awareness of the needs of mothers with a serious mental illness
- Provide additional support to clinicians for managing these mothers so they can optimise the care they provide for their infants in the 6 months after birth (primary and secondary consults)
- Build up the capacity in the community to provide services to these mothers, fathers and infants through training and consultation
- Actively foster development of formal pathways to care
- Build networks and linkages between
 - Specialist mental health
 - Maternity
 - Parenting and family services
 - Enhanced and MCHNs
 - Substance abuse clinics
 - GPs
 - Banksia House inpatient unit
 - PIRI and the Infant Clinic

After conducting several focus groups with community practitioners, we are continuing to map existing services to gain a clear understanding of what is currently offered and to identify gaps in services and areas of need. This is a welcome addition to the services currently provided through the Infant Clinic and Banksia House.

Contact Susan Breton or Adaobi Udechuku for more information on 9496 4496.

