

## The Parent-Infant Research Institute (PIRI) News

Keeping you informed of the goings-on at PIRI.



Best wishes for the Holiday Season



It's that time of year when we look back at the year that was. This year, more than others, there is plenty to reflect on. For PIRI's end of year reflection, we would like to think about the many mothers, fathers, babies and families we have all worked with under unusual circumstance and the great gains we have all made together.

For many of our families, 2021 has been a year full of the joys and challenges of new parenthood which they have experienced alongside their struggles with perinatal depression or anxiety. COVID-19 has continued to add additional challenges for all Australians as we deal with worries, uncertainty, increased isolation and disconnection from communities and support networks.

Our hope, and the purpose of our work here at PIRI, is to achieve the best possible outcomes for the families we work with. We would like to thank you for working together with us to make sure these new families increasingly find ways to enjoy and delight in their babies while looking after their own emotional well-being. We know many of you have done things in different ways this year, and put families first.

We hope you too are able to enjoy spending time with those you love over the Christmas break. May you find time and ways to regroup over the summer and come back to continue in 2022, with whatever challenges that might bring.

Best wishes for the Holiday Season from all of us here at PIRI.



### Working Remotely

The team at PIRI have once again risen to the COVID-19 challenge by remaining predominantly virtual throughout 2021. This transition during 2020 required extensive restructuring of research projects and implementing programs in a remote and virtual environment. We are pleased to report, despite the pandemic, we have remained incredibly productive and have managed to continue all research activities online and work on ongoing projects, publications and grant submissions.

Many of our clinical programs have been delivered using telehealth including our **BUPA Parent and Baby Wellbeing program**, the **Getting Ahead of Postnatal Depression Group**, **Baby HUGS** and the **Community HUGS Therapeutic Playgroup**. All these innovations continue to make treatment more accessible.

## Program Update

Here's a quick update on a range of exciting programs we've had the pleasure of working with many of you on throughout 2021.

**Beating the Blues before Birth (BBB)** PIRI have taken a positive step towards improving emotional well-being of expectant mums and managing the demands of pregnancy. Women joining this study will be offered either cognitive behavioural therapy for depression (delivered via telehealth) during pregnancy or an assessment with advice about enhanced standard care with a letter to their GP. Recruitment is open. [Visit the PIRI website](#) to refer women to this study or take part.

### **DadSpace - A New Website Supporting Dads**

As part of our commitment to building a brighter future, PIRI launched an exciting new website, supporting dads in the transition to parenthood. [DadSpace](#) is dedicated to supporting fathers across Australia and provides information, strategies, tips, resources, and support specifically for dads who are expecting or have a new baby. DadSpace also includes a call for dads who are experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety to join our trial of our new dads online treatment program [DadBooster](#), a world-first specialised online treatment based upon a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approach.

### **Community HUGS e-learning course**

This course introduces learners to key understandings about working to enhance the mother-infant interaction and relationship. It explores the background to the Community HUGS Therapeutic playgroup developed at PIRI. It introduces our approach to working with mothers and their babies who are recovering from a range of adversities that might impact on bonding and attachment in the early postnatal period, including postnatal depression and anxiety, difficult pregnancy and birth, maternal or baby illness, difficult family history or childhood adversity. People completing this training are invited to use the materials to run their own CHUGS playgroups and to also reflect on how they can integrate some of the CHUGS strategies into their interactions and work with mothers and their babies. For more information about Community HUGS, email Jennifer Ericksen [jennifer.ericksen@austin.org.au](mailto:jennifer.ericksen@austin.org.au)

### **MumMoodBooster Helps Treat over 6,000 Mums**

Our innovative world-first [online postnatal depression treatment program](#), accessed via [MumSpace](#) is reaching and supporting families across Australia. Over 6,000 women have been treated with online CBT and over 107,000 accessed MumSpace for ongoing support. PIRI remain absolutely committed to working with families and health professionals to ensure better outcomes and a bright future.

### **Latest Randomized Controlled Trial of MumMoodBooster**

Previous research has confirmed that symptoms of postnatal depression (PND) can be ameliorated through internet-delivered psychological interventions. Advantages of internet-delivered treatment include anonymity, convenience, and catering to women who are unable to access face-to-face (FTF) treatments. To date, no research has examined the efficacy of such interventions compared directly with FTF treatments in women clinically diagnosed with PND.

**In this Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT), MumMoodBooster (MMB) was at least as effective as Face-to-Face-CBT in achieving remission from a diagnosed PND episode.** MMB was superior to TAU and FTF-CBT in encouraging and maintaining reduction of symptom severity over the 21-week follow-up for depressed postnatal women. These findings replicate results of prior studies on MMB that showed clinically significant improvements in depressive symptoms, and they provide direct empirical support that internet-delivered treatment for depressed postnatal women is a viable alternative to FTF treatment. The generalizability of the results needs to be examined in future research, as RCTs of internet-based versus FTF treatments necessarily involve a subset of people who are willing to undertake either modality of treatment.



## Best Scientific Poster Awarded

The Parent-Infant Research Institute (PIRI) is excited to have received an award for Best Scientific Poster at the Australasian Marce Society & Tresillian Family Care Centre's 'New Paradigms in Parenting, Perinatal Mental Health & Wellbeing' Virtual Conference, 9-10 September 2021.

The paper, Improving the mother-infant relationship following postnatal depression: A randomised controlled trial of a brief intervention (HUGS), was published by Charlene Holt, Carole Gentilleau, Alan W. Gemmill, and Jeannette Milgrom.

The study evaluated the effect of a brief, group mother-infant interaction intervention ("Happiness, Understanding, Giving and Sharing": HUGS), compared to a control playgroup, both following cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) for PND, on mother-infant relationships and early child developmental outcomes.

[Find out more here >>](#)

## PIRI's commitment

PIRI is a not-for-profit research institute which conducts international research and develops rigorously evaluated early intervention programs that enhance perinatal mental health and improve early parent-infant relationships (0-2 years). PIRI's 20-years of ground-breaking work has resulted in a suite of evidence-based programs that have and will continue to provide support to thousands of Australian mothers, children and their families.

Find out how you can help by contacting the PIRI team.

Parent-Infant Research Institute  
03 9496 4496 | [piri@austin.org.au](mailto:piri@austin.org.au)  
[www.piri.org.au](http://www.piri.org.au)



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