

Research Directions

Office of Research Services

Pregnant Women In the Pink

Dr Janette Perz from the School of Psychology is exploring how effective psychological services are in assisting pregnant women with mental health issues, through a collaboration with the Nepean Division of General Practice (NDGP).



'While pregnancy might generally be thought of as a time of joy and happiness, a significant proportion of women suffer depression, anxiety and other mental illness before childbirth' says Dr Perz. 'A key area where such issues may be detected is through general medical practitioners, since GPs often have regular contact with women before, during and after pregnancy and are in a position to detect emerging mental health problems and refer patients to appropriate psychological services to address them. This project is a pilot study to evaluate how effective such psychological services are in alleviating mental health symptoms and the subsequent expectations and outcomes of mothers and their babies.'

Working closely with the research partner, Dr Perz will, subject to ethical review, access NDGP records of psychosocial and mental health care assessments, and survey patients who have accessed allied psychological services during pregnancy in order to evaluate changes in levels of depression, anxiety and confidence about parenting before and after treatment. Women will also be interviewed before and after accessing mental health services to find out about their expectations of childbirth, motherhood and their future baby.

This research project is expected to form the basis of a larger study into antenatal mental health services, and will provide NDGP with valuable information about the benefits of referrals of pregnant women with mental health issues to psychological services by GPs. In the longer term, this study may impact on the frequency of such referrals, and increase understanding amongst GPs and the community of the importance of maintaining good mental health during and after pregnancy. This could ultimately lead to better mental health and general health outcomes for mothers and their families.

Project Title: Pink Link: Pilot Study Evaluating the Efficacy of Access to Allied Psychological Services for Antenatal Patients through General Practice

Funding has been set at: \$8,250

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