

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

That Time of the Month

Professor Jane Ussher and Dr Janette Perz from the School of Psychology are collaborating with Dr Edith Weisberg from Family Planning New South Wales to explore the effectiveness of a couple-based psychological intervention on Premenstrual Syndrome through an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project grant.

'Forty percent of women are seriously affected by Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS), causing symptoms such as debilitating pain, stress and anxiety, and reduced quality of life' says Professor Ussher. 'Issues associated with PMS are now recognised to be a major social and health problem, with some studies estimating 95% of women experience physical and psychological changes premenstrually, with a significant proportion reporting severe distress and disruption to their lives. The costs of premenstrual distress, in terms of women's quality of life and economic functioning, are estimated to be considerable. Studies show that relationship factors such as being overly responsible for the maintenance of family and home duties, or being dissatisfied with aspects of a relationship can exacerbate PMS, while supportive partners can reduce women's distress and facilitate positive coping strategies.'

The research team will conduct a randomised-control trial of a couple based PMS intervention, compared to a group of women receiving an existing one-to-one therapy, and a group on a waiting list to receive treatment, who will also receive a self-help pack. Analysis of intervention results, along with interview and standardised questionnaire data, will allow the investigators to evaluate the effectiveness of the couple-based therapy, and to identify possible mechanisms of how different modalities of PMS



treatment elicit changes in mood, behaviour, and physical symptoms, as well as facilitating effective coping.

This project will assist health care providers to understand the experience and treatment of PMS in the context of family relationships, thereby reducing PMS and the physical and psychological distress associated with it. This will lead to improved psychological well-being and quality of life for women and their families.

Project Title: Evaluation of the relative efficacy and mechanisms of a couple-based intervention for Premenstrual Syndrome through a randomised control trial using mixed methods

Funding has been set at: \$420,000

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