

# **Fathers' Perinatal Mental Health: An Important and Neglected Topic**

**Holly Rominov<sup>1</sup>, Rebecca Giallo<sup>2</sup>, Pamela Pilkington<sup>1</sup>, and Thomas Whelan<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>2</sup>Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Melbourne Australia

Email: holly.rominov@acu.edu.au

## ***Full Oral Presentation***

**Background:** The perinatal period represents a highly significant transition for fathers, and can result in an increased vulnerability to psychological distress (Paulson & Bazemore, 2010). Fathers' perinatal mental health is a critical area of research, due to the potential consequences for the whole family system (Kane & Garber, 2004).

**Methods:** A three-part project focusing on fathers' mental health in the perinatal period was conducted. First, the longitudinal relationships between fathers' psychological distress and parenting self-efficacy in the postnatal period, parenting behaviour when children were aged 4-5 years, and emotional-behavioural outcomes for children aged 8-9 years were explored. Second, a systematic review was conducted to ascertain the current status and evidence for intervention programs aiming to prevent or treat paternal mental illness in the perinatal period. Finally, a qualitative study explored fathers' perceived support needs, barriers and facilitators to accessing mental health and parenting support in the perinatal period.

**Results:** The long-term consequences for children of fathers' mood problems highlighted the need for interventions to target fathers' mental health during the perinatal period. Nonetheless, the current evidence regarding the effectiveness of interventions is limited and studies lack methodological rigour. Additionally, future interventions need to be informed by father voices, focusing on their specific support needs.

**Conclusion:** This information can inform policy, services and intervention efforts targeting the promotion of fathers' mental health and parenting in the perinatal period.

**Key words:** father, mental health, perinatal

## **References:**

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