

Australia's first mental health and wellbeing campaign for new fathers: Planning, implementation and progress of the Healthy Dads project.

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This presentation will report on the planning, implementation and progress of Australia's first national mental health and wellbeing campaign for new fathers. The campaign aims to support men's mental health by facilitating early access to information and support for managing the stresses of new parenthood. New fathers are at an increased risk of experiencing psychological distress, however, their distress is mostly unidentified and does not receive tailored support¹. Previous research by *beyondblue*² has identified several psychological barriers to engaging men about their mental health in the perinatal period, including a) the internalised pressure men can feel in their fathering role which encompasses feelings of pride and self-sufficiency, a reluctance to share their distress with their partner, and feeling shame and a sense of failure when they are unable to cope with the challenges and commitments of fatherhood by themselves; b) Many new fathers have an incomplete and stigmatised understanding of perinatal anxiety and depression and how it can affect men; and c) Often new fathers rely on their partner to be the conduit to advice and support, or they wait until a crisis point is reached to seek help for themselves. This presentation will outline the rationale and approach to the digital and social media campaign for new fathers and how it addresses the identified barriers to disrupt men's traditional information and support seeking behaviours. Preliminary data of the campaign's effectiveness in reaching and engaging new fathers will also be presented.

Key words: fathers, mental health, help-seeking

References

¹ Habib, C. (2012). Paternal perinatal depression: An overview and suggestions towards an intervention model. *Journal of Family Studies*, 18 (1), 4-16.

² *beyondblue* (2015). *Healthy Dads? The challenge of being a new father*. Available at: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/about-us/research-projects/research-projects/dads-research>