

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The impact of psychosocial assessments on mothers

Associate Professor Virginia Schmied from the Family and Community Health Research Group and School of Nursing and Midwifery is investigating the process and impact of psychosocial assessments on women by midwives and child and family health nurses (CFHN) during their prenatal and postnatal visits. This research is funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage program in partnership with Karitane.

'Social and emotional problems in women during and after pregnancy have been linked to poor health outcomes for both mother and child', explains Associate Professor Schmied. 'Researchers estimate that thirty per cent of pregnant women and new mothers are living with two or more psychosocial risk factors. A proper assessment of mothers both pre- and postnatally to pick up if they are experiencing psychological conditions such as postpartum depression or social conditions, such as domestic violence, is one way for midwives and nurses to ensure women and their infants are offered the services they need. Endorsed assessment tools are currently used and this research will explore how the delivery of the assessment and the assessment itself impacts on the on women's experience and uptake of services and their social and emotional health'.

The research will involve a random sample of pregnant women/mothers in metropolitan Sydney. Researchers will observe and record the conduct of psychosocial assessments carried out by midwives and nurses during the pre- and postnatal visits. Additional data will be obtained through interviews with the women before and after giving birth, from clinical records and by surveying the participating women to gather specific information about their access to the services and facilities available and their relationships with the midwives and nurses.



Researchers will also interview midwives and nurses to identify their perceptions and experiences of performing psychosocial assessments. The collated data will contribute to a picture of the psychosocial profile of the mothers and the assessment process.

The benefit of this research is the early identification of women (and families) who are at risk from a range of psychological conditions and social factors during and following pregnancy. Early identification of at risk women will allow for the necessary services and support to be provided promptly, ensuring a better outcome for the mother, child and their families.

Project Title: The perinatal journey: the process and impact of psychosocial assessment

Funding has been set at: \$102,110

Contact Details: v.schmied@uws.edu.au
<http://www.uws.edu.au/fach>

March 2010