**Feasibility and pilot of the Mummy Buddy peer support program for first time mothers.**

**Kwok Hong LAW**1, Ben JACKSON1, Kym GUELFI1, Thinh NGUYEN2 3, Elaine BENNETT4, Karen WYNTER5, Patricia LEAHY-WARREN6, & James DIMMOCK1.

*1 Faculty of Science, School of Human Sciences, The University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia.*

*2 Division of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, The University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia.*

*3 Peel and Rockingham Kwinana Mental Health Service, Perth, Australia.*

*4 Director Research, Ngala, Perth, Australia.*

*5 Quality and Patient Safety Research Centre (QPS), School of Nursing & Midwifery, Deakin University – Western Health Partnership, Melbourne, Australia.*

6 *Director of Graduate Studies and Chair of the Maternal and Infant Health Research Theme, Catherine McAuley School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork, Ireland.*

Corresponding author email: brian.law@research.uwa.edu.au

**Introduction**

Universal interventions have been introduced to prevent anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms among first time mothers, but the efficacy of these interventions has been mixed. One reason for the mixed results could be the lack of input from mothers into intervention design.

Objective

To test the feasibility of a preventive program grounded in recommendations from first time mothers. In the ‘Mummy Buddy’ program, new mothers are supported for the first six months postpartum by a trained, ‘experienced’ mother.

Method

Development of program components were informed by a previous study with first time mothers. To date, 47 first time mothers have completed the study at 6-months postpartum. Survey data were completed on program components (i.e. workshop, and mummy buddy support), and overall effectiveness of the program. Interviews were conducted to obtain feedback on the program and dropout rates were assessed. Outcome variables including stress and depressive symptoms, and maternal functioning (EPDS, DASS-21 & BIMF) were collected.

Findings

The program was well received, with 89.1% and 85.8% of new mothers agreeing or strongly agreeing to recommend the program to a friend, and being satisfied with the program, respectively. Dropout rate was only 4.3% (two out of 47). Feedback from interviews highlighted that new mothers felt the program was valuable, but that they desired more structured contact with their Mummy Buddy. New mothers fell within the normal range of scores for all outcome measures.

**Key Points/Learning Outcomes**

Results from this study suggest that a peer support program using experienced volunteer mothers appears to represent a cost-effective and feasible method in providing preventive support to first time mothers, and holds promise for supporting at-risk mothers. Thus, there are on-going plans to move the program onto an online platform to make the program widely available, including in rural areas, and include at-risk population.