

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Midwifery Initiated Oral Health (MIOH)

Dr Ajesh George and Professor Maree Johnson from the School of Nursing and Midwifery are working with a team of researchers from Sydney South West Area Health Service, Sydney Dental Hospital and the University of Sydney to examine how to improve maternal and infant outcomes for mothers who have poor oral health in Sydney's southwest area. This research has been funded by the Australian Dental Association (NSW).

'Poor oral health during pregnancy may have a major impact on both the health of the mother and of the child' explains Professor Johnson. 'Reports show pregnant women with poor oral health are seven times more likely to have a premature delivery and/or low birth weight deliveries, and their children are five times more likely to have oral health problems.'

The broad aim of this research is to develop an oral health service program that midwives can utilise to maintain the oral health of pregnant mothers in southwest Sydney. This research will constitute the first two phases of a larger five phase study. Phase one will be a review of any existing data in order to determine which prenatal interventions have proven to be effective in improving the oral health outcomes of mothers and infants. Phase two will focus more on the understanding and practicality of the proposed oral health services. This will be achieved through focus groups with midwives and interviews with pregnant women around the southwest Sydney area who have been found to be particularly vulnerable to poor oral health during pregnancy. The information will be used to develop a new oral health screening tool and produce an educational package for pregnant women. As well, a cross sectional survey of an estimated 350 pregnant women will be conducted by a dental assistant, and will include information relating to socio-demographics, risk factors during pregnancy and



many recommended oral health assessments, including: bleeding gums, toothache, mouth problems and time of last dental visit. This information will help develop a more comprehensive midwifery initiated oral health service program tailored to the south western Sydney community.

This research aims to offer a cost-effective and simple way of addressing a serious health issue, benefiting the health of Australian mothers and infants.

Project Title: Development of a Midwifery-initiated Oral Health (MIOH) Service for Pregnant Women in South West Sydney

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