Greetings

Hello and welcome to our very first Newsletter written especially for you, the participants, of The National Register of Antipsychotic Medication in Pregnancy (NRAMP).

The NRAMP Team, here at the Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre, the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne, Victoria, would like to offer our heartfelt thanks for your generous participation in this vital study. We would not be able to maintain the momentum required without your wholehearted involvement and support of every aspect of the study.

Some interesting facts and figures

We have consented women from across Australia to take part in NRAMP. To date, the majority of participants live in NSW and Victoria, but also include a growing number from WA. Approximately half this figure have completed their involvement with the study, while the remainder are either in the antenatal or postnatal phase. Ages range between 21 and 41 years. Medications include quetiapine (seroquel), olanzapine (zyprexa), risperidone, clozapine, abilify (aripiprazole) haloperidol and zuclopenthixol, to name a few.

Good news

The most exciting news to report would have to be the 56 live births we have recorded so far.

We are always delighted to hear your news as we journey with you during your pregnancy, catch up with you following your delivery, and of course keep up to date with the progress of your baby and yourself over the first 12 months of your baby’s life. Whether you are having your first baby or have had previous pregnancies, the information you so willingly provide is essential to the development of the register. This information, which is completely de-identified, will be extremely helpful in the development of treatment guidelines for the safest care of women who take antipsychotic medication during pregnancy. We are infinitely grateful for your willing participation.
Managing your mental health during pregnancy & early parenthood

Lots of people find pregnancy is a time when they re-evaluate their lives and their relationships. Your health professionals or your support network can help you make the best decisions for you and your baby.

If you are planning a pregnancy

There are things you can do even at this early stage to make pregnancy and parenting easier:

♦ Tell your doctor that you are planning to have a baby and discuss how to manage your illness during pregnancy.
♦ Discuss with your doctor any medications you may be taking and any effect they may have on pregnancy, baby's development or breast feeding. (This is where the NRAMP Register will become extremely useful).
♦ Build up your support networks
♦ Find out about local support services such as preparation for parenthood classes, child health centres and child care.

Stay well for yourself and your baby

♦ Find time to relax and take care of yourself.
♦ Keep as healthy as possible. Eat healthy foods and do some exercise. Ask your doctor about the benefits of taking folic acid.
♦ Recreational drugs, smoking and alcohol can harm your baby - now is the best time to stop taking them.
♦ Maintain stability in your life. If possible, avoid stressful changes such as moving house.
♦ If you want to breastfeed, discuss this with your doctor. If you decide that breastfeeding is not best for you or your baby, get advice from your child health nurse or midwife about how to make bottle feeding a pleasant experience for you and your baby. (This is also an important area which the NRAMP Register will focus on).

Your medication during pregnancy

If you are planning to have a baby or are pregnant, it is important to discuss your medication with your doctor. Properly managed medication can relieve symptoms of your illness, lower stress and help you function, so that you can enjoy your pregnancy and time with your new baby. (Your doctor will be able to refer to the NRAMP Register for advice).

While you are pregnant

♦ Plan ahead to avoid stress
♦ Involve your support networks
♦ Develop a baby care plan for times when you may be unwell
♦ Discuss medication, treatment issues and baby's needs with your health professionals
♦ Budget for extra things you will need
Organise baby needs well in advance. Find out how to make your home baby safe.

Expect some emotional and hormonal changes throughout your pregnancy.

Include some rest times in your day and reduce your daily workload.

Eat healthy foods and exercise.

Visit your psychiatrist and/or GP regularly to discuss medication, breastfeeding, warning signs of your illness and a schedule of postnatal visits.

Keep up your antenatal visits.

**Alcohol and other drugs**

Alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs (including misuse of prescription drugs) can affect your own physical and mental health and the health of your unborn baby.

These drugs may make you feel better in the short term, but they may harm the health of your baby and can really hinder your ability to parent. Some drugs can also get into the breast milk.

There are non-judgmental services available to help you.

Call the **Family Drug Support Line on 1300-368-186**

**Now your baby is here**

Being a parent is rewarding but it can also be a challenge, especially if you have mental health problems.

- Talk to your doctor about if an how your illness or medication may affect your parenting.
- Find out what additional help is available - home help, social workers, support groups.
- Tell your support people how they can help.
- Make time to play with and enjoy your baby.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for help.
- Maintain visits with your health professionals.
- Seek help immediately if you have thoughts of harming yourself or your baby.
- Ring the **Child Care Access Helpline on 1800-670-305** for advice about local childcare options.

**Play is great for both of you**

- Babies need play to learn and to develop.
- Let your baby teach you how to play and have fun.
- Babies like to be held and rocked, to be read and sung to.
- Older infants like peek-a-boo games and noisy and colourful objects, or imitating what you do.
- Playing with your baby is not wasting time.

**If both parents experience mental illness**

Having a baby can be stressful. You can seek help from your health professionals and support people as early as possible. Set up emergency care plans for your baby, to include things like:
baby’s feeding likes and dislikes
¬ things that help your baby settle or sleep
¬ contact details of adults you have arranged for your baby to stay with and names of your baby’s doctors and other important details.

Look after yourself so you can support your baby and your partner.

Contact the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800-242-636, for practical and financial information and advice.

For more information and help

**Parent Helplines:**

VIC: 132-289

NSW: Karitane Care Line: 1300-227-464

Tresillian: 1800-637-357

SA: 1300-364-100

WA: 1800-654-432

QLD & NT: 1300-301-300

TAS: 1800-808-178

ACT: (02) 6287-3833

**Smoking Quit Line:** 131-848

**Reference**

This information has been drawn from 'The best for me and my baby', published by the Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association, and supported by the Dept of Health and Ageing, 2007, for the Australian Government.

**In Conclusion**

We hope you have found the first issue of our NRAMP Participant Newsletter interesting and informative. The next issue will be available in October 2009.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any suggestions or comments you would like to make about anything study related. Contact details are below.

**Sponsors**

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