Welcome to the fourth issue of our Participant Newsletter

We extend a very warm welcome to The National Register of Antipsychotic Medication in Pregnancy (NRAMP) and in particular to this, our 4th issue of the Participant Newsletter. We are grateful for the continued interest of our participants and also welcome those among you who may be considering taking part in our research study. We encourage your queries, comments and suggestions, and suggest discussion of this study, and your possible involvement, with your family, friends and healthcare professionals.

What is NRAMP?
The National Register of Antipsychotic Medication in Pregnancy (NRAMP) is a unique, Australia-wide, ongoing research study for women of child-bearing age who take antipsychotic medication during pregnancy.

NRAMP Aims
✓ To support the healthy growth and development of babies whose mothers take antipsychotic medication during pregnancy and breast feeding
✓ To develop guidelines for the safe care of mothers who take antipsychotic medication during pregnancy and breast feeding, and the development of their babies

NRAMP Facts & Figures
NRAMP has been an active research study since 2005. In that time, 250 women from around Australia have consented to take part, with the majority living in Victoria, NSW and WA. Maternal age is between 18 and 43 years, with 33 years being the median. Currently, we have recorded 208 live births, with healthy outcomes for mothers and babies. The remainder have yet to birth their babies.

Taking part in NRAMP
We are seeking women who:
✓ Take antipsychotic medication during pregnancy?
✓ Are pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months?
✓ Can provide informed consent to take part in the study?

Possible benefits of taking part in NRAMP?
Participants will be contributing directly towards the safe use of antipsychotic medication during pregnancy, for the benefit of present and future generations. Other possible benefits include contact with professional medical and research staff, the supportive environment within which study interviews are conducted, the assurance of confidentiality when discussing personal issues and the opportunity to ask questions as needed.

Sharing your Story
Have you ever thought about sharing your story with others, either in word or written text? Would you perhaps be interested in sharing your story with us? We are always very keen to hear of your experiences, particularly in relation to your antipsychotic medication use during pregnancy and breast feeding. This can often provide the opportunity for the release of stress and tension, being very cathartic for some women, who state they have a sense of relief once their story has been told. NRAMP Personnel are able to guide you through the narrative process if this would be helpful to you. Our collection of stories is steadily growing; we would ultimately like to put them onto our NRAMP website, with your permission of course. Please be assured that any information you provide will be de-identified to protect and safeguard your privacy.
Emotional health and wellbeing during pregnancy

Emotional health is part of feeling well, it helps us to cope better with stressful situations, maintain relationships and enjoy life. Just as there are many benefits from feeling physically well, strong emotional health will benefit you and your baby. During pregnancy, your growing baby is exposed to everything that is experienced by you, be that the air you breathe, the food you eat or the emotions you feel. Your feelings of calm and happiness are transferred to your baby, establishing a strong, nurturing environment within which your baby can grow and develop.

On the other hand, feelings of stress and anxiety can also affect your developing baby, so looking after yourself during your pregnancy, both physically and emotionally, can help you to not only enjoy pregnancy but will also optimise your baby’s health and wellbeing.

Following the birth, your baby will continue to receive all sorts of information from the surrounding environment, including every interaction you have together. All these things will help to shape the way your baby thinks and reacts to different situations, both now and later in life. They also help to form a close and secure relationship between you and your baby. Good emotional health also helps to maintain strong, positive relationships with any older children and other family members, including your partner.

Supporting yourself during pregnancy

• If you have a partner, talk together about the difference a new baby will make to your lives
• Try not to expect too much of yourself, make time to rest and relax, this is important too
• Arrange extra support for the first few weeks with your new baby, this is often very helpful
• Talk to someone you trust about your feelings, the act of sharing your feelings can also be very helpful
• Extend your support network if this would be helpful to you
• Do ask questions, when you visit your GP, midwife, obstetrician, child and maternal health nurse
• Be careful what you read, particularly on the internet; some sites are unreliable and may cause you distress
• Be aware of how you are feeling and note any changes from what is normal for you; visit your GP or other supports to discuss this if you are concerned, the earlier the better

Supporting yourself after your baby is born

• Value your role as a mother, it is such an important job
• Make time to play with and cuddle your baby, do fun things together
• Remind yourself that there is no ‘right’ way to parent, every mother and every baby is an individual
• It takes time to adjust to your new baby, your normal routine may need some adjustments
• Remember that babies adapt to different styles of parenting; your partner may do things differently to you
• Plan to access and accept extra support in the first few weeks following the birth
• Share the household chores as much as possible; your house doesn’t need to be perfect
• Try not to make any major life changes in the first few months, things like moving house or changing jobs, unless absolutely necessary, these can be very stressful
• Share your feelings, thoughts, concerns with someone you trust
• Try not to spend all day in your pyjamas, showering and dressing can help you feel good
• Get to know your local resources, things like Playgroups, Mothers’ Groups
• Try to rest when your baby is resting, this is not a good time to catch up on the household chores
• Give yourself some ‘time out’ each day, if possible, learn ways to relax
• Try to maintain a social life, keeping contact with your friends and family can be very positive and uplifting
• Plan some quality time alone with your partner each week, if possible
• Take care of your own health, including diet, exercise and sleep
• Maintain regular check ups with your GP, child and maternal health nurse; ask questions
• Be aware of any changes in your own mood and seek advice if you are concerned

Needing help does not mean that you are weak or a bad parent; the sooner you seek help the sooner you can access care and support

NRAMP Personnel

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Excerpts taken from:
‘Becoming a Parent, Emotional Health and Wellbeing’, 2009, Department of Health, Western Australia