



Tanya Davies
Minister for Mental Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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IMPROVING PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Groundbreaking Australian research released in Sydney today has highlighted the potential for digital mental health screenings to be used to assist in identifying new and expecting mothers who may need additional mental health care.

The Perinatal Integrated Psychosocial Assessment (PIPA) study evaluated the effectiveness of a new online psychosocial self-assessment and electronic clinician aids and compared it to the current method of face-to-face assessment.

Minister for Mental Health Tanya Davies joined Professor Marie-Paule Austin, the architect of best practice perinatal mental health care in Australia, and Member for Coogee Bruce Notley-Smith to launch the study at Sydney's Royal Hospital for Women.

"The PIPA study shows that this new approach is effective in quickly detecting women in need of additional care. The online tools also helped midwives and health professionals to better manage referrals and follow up care when it was needed," Mrs Davies said.

"We know it is so important that expectant parents are screened for mental health and psychosocial needs both antenatally and postnatally, and the study will be invaluable in helping Government consider how to improve our existing universal screenings in future."

The research, led by Professor Austin, involved interviews with 25 midwives and 1212 women, and reviewed data over several years from more than 6,800 women.

"This new system improved on the current process by including clinical questions into a digitalised approach that was trialled in a real maternity setting," Professor Austin said.

"Untreated perinatal anxiety and depression can have an enduring negative impact on the woman, her developing infant, and her partner and family, so it's important we refine methods to improve screening and referral processes."

Mr Notley-Smith said he was delighted at the impact the study is already making in the care of local women.

"Around 1 in 10 women experience clinical depression or anxiety in the perinatal period, and I'm proud that here at the Royal Hospital for Women we are leading the way in improving care for expectant and new mothers," Mr Notley-Smith said.

The full findings of the research report will be released in early 2019.

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