

WOMen's action for Mums and Bubs (WOMB): A trial of participatory women's groups to improve Indigenous maternal and child health

Why is this important?

We know that community involvement in Indigenous health care helps to improve health outcomes. Through continuous quality improvement (CQI) some gains in quality of care have been made but more needs to be done. We know that in some low resource countries community involvement in maternal and child health (MCH) care not only helps to empower women but leads to health improvements for women and their babies. In Australia, we don't know whether improvement in MCH outcomes will result from Indigenous women's groups engaging with MCH data. This project aims to find out:

- 1) The effectiveness of women's groups in improving quality of care & intermediate outcomes in MCH;
- 2) The cost-effectiveness of women's groups for improving quality of MCH care; and
- 3) The degree to which the women's groups are associated with a change in global empowerment measure (GEM) scores.

How will we address it?

- Identify services and communities that want to take part (eligible if doing CQI audits in MCH)
- Work together with these services in a learning community
- Identify suitable women to be part of a women's group (or suitable local group)
- PHC services (including Aboriginal Health Practitioners; (AHP), in association with community women's groups, will nominate two individuals who will work as facilitators and attend two-way learning workshops.
- Work with these groups to engage with local service CQI data and suggest ways to improve
- PWGs will share local knowledge and community perspectives, focus on building community expectations, encourage community ownership of services, and engage in activism for quality care.
- Workshops will involve sharing about facilitation skills, MCH audit data, and working in partnership. Following the workshops, the facilitators will work with the women's groups and health care staff to prioritise action, plan strategies, co-implement plans and evaluate progress through the annual audit cycles.
- There will be help from the project team in all aspects, especially to monitor the outcomes for mothers and their babies in terms of MCH audit data.

What we hope to achieve

It is clear that Indigenous community involvement in health care is of vital importance. But there is limited evidence in mainstream health thinking about how or why it is important. This project is valuable because it provides an opportunity to learn from communities and from women's groups about **how and why** we should all work in partnership to continue to improve the health of mums and bubs.

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Research Team

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