

E Moe, Māmā: Maternal Sleep and Health in Aotearoa/New Zealand

December 2011

Issue 5



Kia ora and Welcome to the Christmas edition of the E Moe, Māmā: Maternal Sleep and Health in Aotearoa/New Zealand newsletter. 2011 has been an incredibly busy but successful year for everyone involved in this study. Recruitment closed on October 01 2011 with more than 1,000 women enrolled to take part. A big thank-you to all of our participants, poster locations, recruitment sites, local champions and everyone who has helped to spread the word about the study amongst the community. We look forward to sharing the results of the project with you all in late 2012.

In the newsletter this month we highlight the exciting research being undertaken by Bronwyn Sweeney who is a member of the E Moe, Māmā research team and a PhD student. We also consider some of the challenges associated with completing the 12-week postpartum questionnaire and what we can do to help make this a little easier. We also let you know about some of the ideas that we have to continue the quest to investigate the sleep of mothers and their children in the future.

Finally, the E Moe, Māmā Research team would like to wish you and your family a relaxing and enjoyable break over the Christmas and the New Year holidays.



Pack tracking sheets and extra packs

We would like to thank our recruitment sites for their assistance in promoting and distributing information packs for the E Moe, Māmā study. We appreciate your effort and the time you have dedicated to this project.

We would appreciate it if you would return any left-over packs or *bright yellow pack-tracking sheets* ASAP. Contact us on 0800 MUMSLEEP (686 7537) or mumsleep@massey.ac.nz and we will arrange for someone to collect these items.

12 Week survey reminder

Recruiting Māori women into the E Moe, Māmā Study has been a major focus for the team over the last 12 months. Recruitment closed on October 1 2011 with 421 Māori and 768 non-Māori enrolled to take part. This is a significant achievement and the team extend their thanks to everyone who has helped us to reach this major milestone.

In our last newsletter we talked about the importance of having equal numbers of Māori and non-Māori participants taking part in this study to ensure that the information we provide is useful and relevant for both communities. Getting pregnant women involved in the study was an important step towards achieving our aims. However we also need as many women as possible to complete each stage of the study so that we can understand how sleep changes during pregnancy (35-37 weeks gestation) **and** after baby is born (4-6 weeks postpartum and 12-weeks postpartum) and the impact of these changes on the mothers health, wellbeing and mood.

We've noticed that some women are not sending back their 12-week questionnaire. We understand how busy life can be with a new baby and that finding time to sit down, fill-out the questionnaire and send it back to us can be very difficult. So, to help make the process a little easier we are offering the following alternatives for our participants:

- (1) **Complete the questionnaire over the phone:** if you have received your 12-week questionnaire and would prefer to complete it over the phone then you can text, call or email us and a research team member will make a time to go through the questionnaire with you.
- (2) **Send your questionnaire back by courier:** if you've filled out your questionnaire but are finding it difficult to get to the post-office to send it back then let us know. We will arrange for a courier to come to your home and pick it up from you directly. Don't panic, you don't need to wait for the courier to arrive, you can leave it on your doorstep or in a safe place and the courier will find it.

Remember, once we have your questionnaire information back then we can send you a New World, Farmers, or Petrol voucher. Just in time for Christmas!



PIPIS (Parent Information on Parent and Infant Sleep) Study

How much sleep should my new baby be getting?

Am I making a rod for my own back by rocking my two-week old to sleep in my arms? WHEN will my baby sleep through the night???

These are just some of the questions midwives, Well Child nurses, childbirth educators, doctors and family get asked by tired new parents. They are also questions that we think are really important. Sleep in the early days is important for babies' health and development, including their growth and the establishment of regular sleeping and waking patterns. The amount and quality of sleep that new parents get is also linked to how they are feeling, how they cope with the parenting role and their overall health and wellbeing.

E Moe, Māmā team member, Bronwyn Sweeney, has been running a trial of a sleep education programme aimed at promoting the sleep of first-time mothers and their babies.

Women in the PIPIS (Parent Information on Parent and Infant Sleep) study have completed the same questionnaires as those in the E Moe, Māmā study. In addition, they were split into two groups (20 women in each) with one group attending a short, general information evening and the other group attending a comprehensive sleep education evening. The mums who attended the education evening also received regular phone calls after their babies were born to see how things were going and offer support and information about sleep, up until the babies were six weeks old. All the mothers and babies in the study had their sleep monitored for 48-hours when the babies were six and twelve weeks old using a special device called an "actiwatch". The actiwatch measures activity, and we then compare the information collected by the watch with information mothers record on a daily diary to calculate how much sleep everyone was getting (or not!).

Bronwyn is completing this study as part of her PhD research. She has a background in Childbirth Education and has spent many years working with new parents who are always keen to maximise the sleep they can get. "It has been a great pleasure for me to get out into the community again and work with new parents. All of the families in the study have been so generous with their time and interest in what we are doing in the project." Results of the study will be available in mid-2012.



Future Research at the Sleep/Wake Research Centre

We now have 1189 women participating in E Moe, Māmā study and almost all have provided us with information on their sleep, health and mood in late pregnancy and again after their baby was born (at 4-6 weeks and 12 weeks of age). Women in the study are from across New Zealand, range in age from 16 to 47 years, and 421 identify as Māori.

Our first priority is to look at this data and answer the questions we set out to address:

- Is there a relationship between sleep duration and quality during late pregnancy and duration of labour and the need for medical intervention at birth?
- Is there a relationship between sleep duration and quality during late pregnancy and early postpartum and changes in postpartum mood?

However, now that we have this amazing dataset from so many New Zealand women we are carefully considering what else might be possible. Because there is very little information available, we are interested in finding out more about how sleep develops and changes in Māori and non-Māori children and how this might affect their health and development, and impact on the sleep and wellbeing of the mother. To answer such questions we would like to continue to follow the amazing women and their children involved in the E Moe, Māmā study over a longer period of time. At present we are looking at what resources are available to us to help us do that.

In August 2011, you should have received a letter from us asking if you were *not* interested in being contacted about future research. By *not* responding you are in no way committing to future research. Once our plans and timeframes are more certain we will contact each woman enrolled in the E Moe, Māmā study and explain in more detail what we intend to do. At that point in time women can decide if they would like to be involved in this research.

If you would like further information on what we are planning, or would like to comment on our ideas, then please contact the E Moe, Māmā research team on 0800 MUMSLEEP (686 7537) or email mumsleep@massey.ac.nz