

STePPS CRE Showcase Advances Digital Perinatal Mental Health Support.

Melbourne, Australia – 10 April 2024

Did you know that up to 1 in 5 Australian women experience perinatal anxiety and depression each year? These troubling statistics underscore the significant challenges surrounding perinatal mental health, which affect not only mothers but also fathers, with 1 in 10 experiencing depression after childbirth.

In light of these statistics, the recent landmark event hosted by the Parent-Infant Research Institute (PIRI) takes on even greater importance. The STePPS CRE Annual Showcase (Centre of Research Excellence in Science Translation for e-Psychological Perinatal Supports), brought together over 60 leading researchers, clinicians, policymakers, and stakeholders on March 21st, 2024. Their shared goal? To address pressing issues in perinatal mental health and explore innovative solutions, specifically focusing on the potential of digital technologies.

The STePPS CRE Annual Showcase and Workshops embraced the theme "*Expanding Horizons in e-Perinatal Support.*" This focus highlights the importance of digital technologies in delivering accessible and effective mental health resources for expecting and new parents. At the heart of this mission lies a profound commitment to addressing the critical gaps that currently impede access to traditional perinatal mental health services.

Showcase Highlights

- The STePPS CRE Annual Showcase brought together over 60 experts, including researchers, clinicians, policymakers, and stakeholders, to share knowledge and foster collaboration on improving mental health support for expecting and new parents.
- Ms. Julie Bignell (Austin Health Board Director) opened the event, followed by video messages from **The Hon Ged Kearney MP**, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, and **The Hon Ingrid Stitt MP**, Victorian Minister for Mental Health, emphasising the critical need for perinatal mental health initiatives.
- Professor Jeannette Milgrom AM (PIRI) delivered a keynote address, "*The Future of e-Psychological Interventions for Perinatal Mental Health,*" outlining the STePPS CRE's vision of generating knowledge, developing interventions, and implementing digital services within a comprehensive perinatal mental health system.
- Marley Berger, a lived experience partner, offered a valuable personal perspective on perinatal mental health challenges.

- The Showcase concluded with a panel discussion and Q&A featuring STePPS Investigators, a world-leading multidisciplinary team. Joining from around the globe, they offered further insights.

Charting the Course

Following a successful showcase, STePPS CRE Investigator team spent two days diving deep into key research areas. These included perinatal depression in mothers and partners, early intervention for infants, anxiety and trauma disorders, and family support systems.

The workshops focused on using global data to identify at-risk families and develop new interventions. They also explored how digital tools can work alongside traditional services to maximise effectiveness, considering cost-effectiveness.

The environment fostered collaboration and knowledge sharing, with a strong focus on ensuring future interventions are inclusive and accessible to all communities.

Looking Forward

The STePPS CRE Annual Showcase and Workshops fostered a spirit of collaboration and yielded valuable strategies to improve perinatal mental health support. With a focus on evidence-based e-solutions, workforce development, and building a more responsive mental health system that integrates seamlessly with traditional care, the STePPS CRE is committed to translating research findings into accessible and effective digital interventions.

“The STePPS CRE Annual Showcase and Workshops provided a vital platform for international collaboration and innovation in perinatal mental health support,” said Professor Jeannette Milgrom AM (Lead, STePPS CRE). *“We are excited to translate our research findings into accessible and effective e-interventions, empowering expecting and new parents with the resources they need to thrive during this critical period.”*

The STePPS CRE envisions a future where expecting and new parents can access critical mental health support through user-friendly digital platforms, making perinatal mental healthcare accessible and effective for all families.

For more information, visit <https://www.stepscre.org/steps-cre-annual-showcase/>

Recordings from Government Ministers, Keynote Speaker and Early Career Researchers are available on the website.

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About the STePPS CRE

The Science Translation for e-Psychological Perinatal Supports (STePPS CRE) brings together a world-leading multidisciplinary research team, comprising researchers, clinical perinatal psychologists & psychiatrists, e-mental health specialists, and health service providers. The CRE team is a global collaboration of experts, leading clinicians, and researchers in perinatal depression, digital health, and health economics.

Over the last decade, our collaborations have led the field internationally, pioneering perinatal e-mental health interventions. We have conducted over 198 clinical trials, published more than 3,080 peer-reviewed papers, supervised over 364 PhDs and post-docs, and secured over \$345 million in competitive funding. This substantial collective knowledge ensures a successful outcome.

Collaboration among our STePPS investigators provides a powerful basis to deliver training, build workforce capacity, and drive translation into policy and practice.

About PIRI

The Parent-Infant Research Institute (PIRI) is a leading research institute dedicated to improving the mental health and wellbeing of mothers, infants, and families during the perinatal period (pregnancy and childbirth). PIRI conducts research, develops interventions, and advocates for policies that promote positive mental health outcomes for all families.

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