

## Study Update December 2020

To all of our valued stakeholders, colleagues, study participants and friends,  
It has been wonderful to see Covid-19 impacts and restrictions easing around the country. Coinciding with this, our study has been able to conduct our final wave of recruitment from our Queensland site. A big thank you to Karen Langford and staff at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital for assisting us by sending out invites to eligible bereaved mothers in November this year.

The Lactation after Infant Death Study aims to explore both bereaved women's lactation experiences and those of the multidisciplinary health team who are engaged in their care with a view to enhancing care delivery in Australia's maternity, bereavement and milk banking services.

The study is being conducted by ANU researchers: Dr. Katherine Carroll, Professor Catherine Waldby & Dr. Debbie Noble-Carr, with funding from the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the ANU and with support from The Canberra Hospital, Mercy Hospital for Women in Melbourne and Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. Additional funding received from the Newborn Intensive Care Foundation has also allowed us to employ Simon Copland to conduct our sub-study with the partners of bereaved mothers. The project will operate from August 2018 – June 2022.

We encourage you to discuss this project with your colleagues and friends and ask them to sign up to receive future quarterly project updates by sending an email to: [lactationafterloss@anu.edu.au](mailto:lactationafterloss@anu.edu.au)

At the time of writing this update we are happy to report that 114 health professionals, 17 mothers and 7 fathers have so far participated in our study. From these interviews we have begun to better understand the complex contexts in which lactation care is provided to families following still birth, neonatal and older infant death. We have discovered that the lactation experiences, needs and preferences of bereaved mothers are highly variable, involving many challenges and often mixed feelings. Bereaved families have indicated that the provision of timely lactation care is critical to their health and wellbeing and that they would like to be presented with all available lactation management options so they can make the best and most appropriate decision for their family. The option of donation of breastmilk after loss is something that all families support being made available, and that some have found especially beneficial to them during the grieving process.

Our interviews have uncovered important insights regarding how lactation care may be enhanced in hospital and community based settings. In the final stages of our study – that has now been extended through to June 2022 – we will continue to work with our major stakeholders and partners to ensure these important findings can be disseminated through a wide range of mediums including: academic papers, presentations, educational or informational resources and podcasts.

If you have any ideas or opportunities on how we can best communicate our findings we would love to hear from you. As always, to stay informed about our project and to locate study publications and resources, visit our project webpage:

<http://sociology.cass.anu.edu.au/lactation-after-infant-death>

Until our next update in March 2021, we wish you all the best and a peaceful Christmas and the New Year.

Warmest regards from the research team...



Dr Katherine Carroll



Professor Catherine Waldby



Dr Debbie Noble-Carr



Simon Copland