



Lactation after Infant Death:

Breastmilk suppression, expression and donation in contemporary motherhood and health service delivery

Newsletter – December 2021

Welcome to the 12th Edition of the Lactation after Infant Death Study Newsletter.

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. Additional funding from Newborn Intensive Care Foundation has also allowed us to include bereaved fathers' perspectives and experiences. The project is being supported by The Canberra Hospital, Mercy Hospital for Women in Melbourne and Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.

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

The final year of our study

It is hard to believe that we are at the end of another challenging, but rewarding year. In our final project newsletter for 2021 we have some exciting news to share including news of our:

- ❖ Publications
- ❖ A Research Award
- ❖ Recent and upcoming Conference Presentations

All of these activities help us to disseminate our study findings and work towards our goal of improving awareness of the variable experience of motherhood, fatherhood and lactation after infant death and enhancing lactation care for bereaved families.

Publications from our study findings

Our recent publication reporting on the factors that shape the delivery of hospital-based lactation care for Australia's bereaved mothers has now featured in a printed volume of the leading international lactation journal *Breastfeeding Medicine*.

Noble-Carr, D., Carroll, K., & Waldby, C. (2021). Mapping Hospital-Based Lactation Care Provided to Bereaved Mothers: A Basis for Quality Improvement, *Breastfeeding Medicine*, 16(10), 779-789.



We have also been busy drafting further papers that we hope will be published in 2022.

Mary Paton Research Award

The Australian Breastfeeding Association's highly competitive Mary Paton Research Award has been won by our research team:

Dr Debbie Noble-Carr, Dr Katherine Carroll, Simon Copland and Professor Catherine Waldby.

The biennial Award recognises excellence in breastfeeding research. The team was granted the Mary Paton Research Award for their winning research paper on bereaved fathers' experiences of their partner's lactation following stillbirth, neonatal or older infant death.

Once again, we extend our thanks to the Newborn Intensive Care Foundation, whose generous funding allowed us to include fathers' experiences in our study.



The winning paper, which will be published in *Breastfeeding Review* in 2022, sheds light on the critical role of fathers in supporting their partners with lactation care and the important role human milk donation can play in parents' grieving following infant loss.

The fathers' perspectives and experiences confirmed earlier research undertaken within the broader ARC funded project on Lactation after Infant Death, recently published in [Breastfeeding Medicine](#), [Journal of Human Lactation](#) and [Health Sociology Review](#).

These papers also draw attention to the limited nature of lactation information and care presented to Australia's bereaved parents and the elision of human milk donation as an option for bereaved parents in Australia.

The winning paper will be available to read in *Breastfeeding Review* next year:



Noble-Carr, D., Carroll, K., Copland, S., & Waldby, C. (2022) "It was a shared duty": Bereaved fathers' perspectives, experiences and practices in relation to their partner's lactation after infant death. *Breastfeeding Review*, March 2022.

Recent Conference Presentations

On **2nd November 2021**, Dr Debbie Noble-Carr presented a paper on "*Bereaved donation: the Australian Experience*" at the [United Kingdom Association of Milk Banking \(UKAMB\) Virtual Forum - From Teardrops to Milk Drops: International and interdisciplinary considerations of bereavement and donation](#). Almost 100 participants from around the world listened to the presentation.

Upcoming Conference Presentations

From 7th – 12th March 2022, Dr Debbie Noble-Carr and Dr Katherine Carroll will present a live presentation on *“Lactation care after bereavement: how we can improve support for families following late miscarriage, stillbirth, neonatal and infant death”* in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth as part of the [Australian Breastfeeding Association’s Health Professional Seminar Series – A thirst for knowledge](#). A [promotional video](#) of our presentation is available on the [Seminar Webpage](#).

As part of the Seminar Series, an additional presentation will also be presented by Dr Debbie Noble-Carr and Dr Katherine Carroll, to be available online. This presentation will discuss *“The meaning of milk in mothers’ mourning: experiences of lactation after infant death”*.

On 11th April 2022, Dr Debbie Noble-Carr and Dr Katherine Carroll will present *“Providing Enhanced Lactation Care for Families Following Late Miscarriage, Stillbirth, Neonatal and Infant Death”* at the [GOLD Lactation Online International Conference](#).



Returning to study sites:

On 17th February 2022, Dr Debbie Noble-Carr and Dr Katherine Carroll will return to [Mercy Hospital for Women](#) in Victoria, to share our study findings with interested health professionals at one their first Grand Rounds presentations for 2022.

Memorial Quilt:

We continue to work with our colleagues in the [ANU School of Art & Design](#) on a heartfelt project to design, make and display a piece of textile art in the form of a cot-sized quilt. The quilt will go on public display to visualise the meanings and experiences of bereaved parents, and help raise awareness and understanding of the experience of lactation after infant death and the consequent lactation care required by bereaved families

Further information:

Keep an eye out for a story featuring our study findings on bereaved donation on the ABC and stay informed about our project and our study publications and resources, by visiting our project webpage: <http://sociology.cass.anu.edu.au/lactation-after-infant-death>

To contact the research team email: lactationafterloss@anu.edu.au

All the best for Christmas and the New Year, warm wishes...



Dr Katherine Carroll



Professor Catherine Waldby



Dr Debbie Noble-Carr



Simon Copland