



## Lactation after Infant Death:

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

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### Newsletter – September 2020

Welcome to the 8th 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 professional team who are engaged in their care with a view to enhancing care delivery in Australia's maternity, bereavement and milk banking services.

In partnership with hospitals in the ACT, Victoria and Queensland, researchers have conducted focus groups and interviews with 114 health professionals and are interviewing up to 40 bereaved mothers and 10 of their partners.

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 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 – December 2021.

We encourage you to circulate this newsletter to your colleagues and to sign up to receive future quarterly editions by sending an email to: [lactationafterloss@anu.edu.au](mailto:lactationafterloss@anu.edu.au)

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### Important happenings in the last three months...

#### *Continuing our data collection*

With Covid-19 restrictions easing around the country, we are currently working with our key stakeholders and waiting on approvals from our Human Research Ethics Committees to allow us to recommence recruitment and data collection with bereaved mothers and their partners.

This final wave of recruitment will allow a further 24 mothers and 3 of their partners to contribute their unique experiences and perspectives of lactation following infant death to our study.

Due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements we will be conducting all remaining interviews with bereaved mothers and their partners by zoom, telephone questionnaire, or written questionnaire.

### ***Disseminating our results***

In July 2020, Katherine and Debbie wrote a feature article for the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) Health Professionals' Newsletter. Thanks to the wide reach of the ABA, our article titled, *'Expanding information and care practices for women experiencing lactation after infant death'* was able to reach 4,700 health sites/professionals.

Our research team has also been busy preparing papers for international social science and health journals...

The first of these papers provides an overview of what we learnt from health professionals about contemporary lactation care practices. Specifically, the paper outlines and addresses the many factors that currently designate if bereaved mothers will receive lactation care, and what lactation care management options they are offered. Some of the more influential factors included: the awareness and knowledge of individual health professionals; the visible presence of breastmilk (either through frozen stores or existing lactation); whether health professionals acknowledge and are prepared to discuss the variable nature of biopsychosocial significance of lactation and/or breastmilk; and availability of Human Milk Banks. The paper also considers how care can be enhanced to ensure all bereaved families are able to make informed decisions about lactation care and management.

The second paper focuses on our reflections from the health professional focus groups. We observed that health professionals were eager to learn about lactation after infant death and that once they discovered the range of responses bereaved mothers may have regarding their lactation, they readily reflected a desire to change their own practices. In this paper we consider the researchers' role in facilitating health professionals' education during focus group discussions and when disseminating research findings.

We are looking forward to the final year of our study where we will be providing targeted feedback and education sessions for our hospital partners.

In addition to reporting back to our key stakeholders, we are currently exploring innovative and effective strategies for health professional education that will enable us to extend our reach beyond our current clinical partners, and ensure our study results can positively impact future healthcare policies and practices for all bereaved families.

If you have any suggestions on how we can best communicate our results to health organisations or health professionals please don't hesitate to contact us:

[lactationafterloss@anu.edu.au](mailto:lactationafterloss@anu.edu.au)

### ***Our latest publication***

Don't forget our latest paper published in the **Journal of Human Lactation**: *'The "Lactation After Infant Death (AID) Framework": A Guide for Online Health Information Provision About Lactation After Stillbirth and Infant Death'*. This paper is freely available and can be downloaded from SAGE Open Access using this link:



<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0890334420926946>

Please feel free to distribute this paper to anyone you think may be interested in enhancing the way lactation care information is presented to bereaved mothers.

### **Want more information?**

As always, to stay informed about our project and to locate all of our study publications and resources, visit our project webpage:

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

To contact the research team, or register to receive this quarterly project newsletter, email: [lactationafterloss@anu.edu.au](mailto:lactationafterloss@anu.edu.au)

Warm wishes from the research team...



***Dr Katherine Carroll***



***Professor Catherine Waldby***



***Dr Debbie Noble-Carr***



***Simon Copland***