



Safely Sleeping Aboriginal Babies in South Australia - Doing it Together

What is the challenge?

The infant mortality rate (IMR) for indigenous infants is 3 to 4 times that of non-indigenous infants for Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SIDs) and Sudden Unexpected Deaths in Infancy (SUDI). The Indigenous IMR has decreased between 1998 to 2015 in Australia with the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous infant mortality also reducing. Despite this, a substantial gap remains. Not only is this gap significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities, it has clinical and sociological significance given that the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) committed in 2007 to halving the gap in the indigenous IMR by 2018.

A further challenge is that current strategies focus on eliminating risk factors that are believed to be within a parent or families control. This approach does not recognise social and cultural, determinants of health. This is especially important where families may not have the social or economic resources to follow safe sleep recommendations.

About this research translation project

This project will enable Aboriginal families in South Australia (SA) to provide a safe sleep environment for their new-born babies and increase family awareness and knowledge of safe sleeping behaviours. In doing so, it contributes to reducing the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous rates of SIDs and SUDI in Australia. It will adapt and translate a culturally safe, alternative sleep space program that has been evidenced in two randomised control trials in New Zealand to be safely offered as an alternative to infant-adult bedsharing. Families who take part in the research will be asked to provide feedback on sleeping their baby the pepi pod way.

To enable health and care workers to become familiar with the pepi pod program, the research begins with development of an on-line safe sleep education BLITZ incorporating a pre and post measures of knowledge. All families who identify as Aboriginal and who are birthing at one of our partner health services during the research period, will be offered to sleep their



babies the pepi pod way. The research will conclude with a health worker survey to assess acceptability and feasibility of the pepi pod way.

Our partners include the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA), SA Health, Port Augusta Hospital, Whyalla Hospital, Lyell McEwin Hospital, the Women and Children's Hospital, and the state-wide Child and Family Health Service. We will be communicating and consulting widely with community and service providers throughout every stage of the research. Please contact us if you would like more information

What will be the impact?

This will be the first time that Aboriginal families in SA will be supported by main stream health services to have access to a culturally appropriate safe-sleep-space. We will see an increase in family and community knowledge and practices about safe infant sleeping. We may also see an increase in breastfeeding, and a decrease in smoking around the baby. This will provide evidence that may lead to long term policy and practice change related to the inclusion of cultural considerations in safely sleeping infants.

Project contact details

Project Title Safely Sleeping Aboriginal Babies in South Australia - Doing it Together

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