

Fatherhood Research in Australia Symposium II 2017 Outcomes

On Day 2 of the Symposium the threads of the Day 1 discussion were taken up. Existing databases for examining fathers and fatherhood over the life course were discussed; qualitative and theoretical work on measurement in fatherhood research and the links between research and interventions with fathers were canvassed.

Development of an Action Plan

With a focus on building collaboration it was decided to first take a specific topic as a focus to develop a mechanism for researchers clinicians and practitioners to begin to work together. The issue of 'fathers and infants sleep' was chosen as a starting topic.

Four working groups were identified: a Literature review group, a Data and analysis group, an Interventions group and a Scientifics communications group and an Action Plan was formulated.

The Consortium

In order to allow all participants at the Symposium to engage with the work while recognising the range of skills and experience represented, it was decided to form a consortium. The purpose of the consortium is to allow groups to develop materials such as research papers or resources with due recognition for authors while also crediting all members of the consortium as contributors.

A proposed statement of purpose for the Consortium was drafted:

The Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium exists to:

- Advance the science of fatherhood;
- Inform practice and policy that supports men and their families;
- Promote healthy inclusion of fathers in family life.

2017 Fatherhood Research in Australia Symposium action plan:

Four working groups were proposed with the aim of trialing a national multi-site and multi-institutional collaboration with the first domain of enquiry to be fatherhood and sleep, specifically father sleep and fathers' role in child sleep.

It was noted that those in attendance had a wide range of domains of interest and some of these might intersect with sleep, while others may not. Therefore, sleep will be a test case to trial and evaluate collaborative processes with a view to developing future consortium enquiries into other fields of interests.

The four working groups, and their assigned initial contact persons, are as follows:

1. **Literature review group.** Contact person is Karen Wynter, Monash University: karen.wynter@monash.edu

2. **Data and analysis group.** Contact person is Jacqui Macdonald, Deakin University: jacqui.macdonald@deakin.edu.au
3. **Interventions group.** Contact person is Natalie Pierssene, Queensland Health: natalie.pierssene@health.qld.gov.au
4. **Scientifics communications group.** Contact person is Matthew Roberts, Mercy Health O'Connell Family Centre, doctormatthewroberts@gmail.com

Development of working group plans

The following is an overview of the initial plans set out on Day 2 of the symposium:

1. **Literature Review Group:** Karen Wynter will first establish whether a current Monash doctoral student is already undertaking a literature review that, through general parenting search terms, captures all literature related to fathers' sleep and father involvement in child sleep. This group will review the student's search terms and decide if there is any need or scope to conduct a further systematic search. If it is agreed that all relevant literature is captured by the student's search, given the student's focus is broadly on parenting and sleep, the group might consider a narrative review and theoretical case for investigating fathers and sleep.
2. **Data and Analysis Group:** This group planned a paper using MAPP (Men and Parenting Pathways) and Ten to Men (National Longitudinal Study of Australian men) wave 1 data. These data are cross-sectional and allow for comparisons between men with and without children. Lyn Colvin will investigate further data opportunities and conditions of use. The draft title of the paper: "Sleep quality, mental health and social functioning: a comparison between men (aged xxx to xxx) who are and are not fathers, in Australia"
3. **Interventions Group:** This group has planned to collect focus group data across 3 sites on fathers and their experiences of and involvement in their children's sleep. The three sites are hosted by Ngala in Western Australia, Queensland Health, and the O'Connell Centre in Melbourne. The aim of the focus groups is to inform development of a sleep intervention to be trialled in Queensland and to inform future SMS4dads content. A recommendation was that the focus group members be invited to be part of an ongoing consumer reference group (CRG) on multiple questions around fatherhood and that this CRG would be available for consultation on future consortium projects.
4. **Scientific Communications Group:** This group proposed the development of key messages on fathers and sleep to be disseminated to the wider community. One proposal was for a video of a father soothing a baby to model paternal-infant healthy sleep behaviours. This group will make use of the evidence base developed by other working groups and will align its activities with theoretical frameworks. It was noted that this group's strategies might have the potential to be formally evaluated and published and activities may need to be reviewed by ethics committees of participating institutions.

Website and social media register

A Fatherhood Research Register of websites and social media sites has been established.

The aim of this register is to share your organisation's or research team's aims, activities and accomplishments via your online presence. This is an important step in raising the profile of fatherhood research in Australia and connecting consortium members to each other's research and practice.

We encourage all fatherhood researchers and practitioners to provide your website and social media addresses to the register via this link: <http://bit.ly/frs-smr>. When you click on the link you will be asked to provide the address and a brief description of the site.

The list of sites will be emailed to all consortium members with the hope that individuals will 'like' or 'follow' accounts or share links on websites. We aim to check and update links every 6 months.

ECR and student group

An additional idea that was raised but not discussed in detail was to establish an Early Career Research group for ECRs and students. Many research organisations have such groups in which organised activities and resources are provided to students to assist with career development. Established researchers interested in supporting an ECR group and ECRs and students interested in joining such a group can express interest by emailing Jennifer StGeorge: jennifer.stgeorge@newcastle.edu.au