

Victorian Survey of Recent Mothers 2000

Research team: Dr Stephanie Brown, Prof Judith Lumley, Fiona Bruinsma, and Mary-Ann Darcy, Centre for the Study of Mothers' and Children's Health, School of Public Health, La Trobe University (www.latrobe.edu.au/www/csmch), 251 Faraday Street, CARLTON 3053

This study aims to investigate the childbirth and early postnatal experiences of a representative sample of Victorian women who gave birth in 1999. It includes women's satisfaction with care, and physical and emotional health.

The study builds on two earlier Victoria surveys of recent mothers conducted in 1989 and 1994. The first survey was conducted in conjunction with the Victorian Ministerial Review of Birthing Services. Recommendations made in the Review were informed by the results of the 1989 Survey. The second survey, conducted in 1993/94, provided an opportunity to assess whether there had been any changes in women's satisfaction with maternity care over the four years since the earlier survey. The results of this study informed the development of initiatives funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services under a four year Maternity Services Enhancement Strategy that began in 1998.

The third Victorian Survey of Recent Mothers has been commissioned by the Victorian Department of Human Services (www.dhs.vic.gov.au) to inform the continuing development of the Maternity Services Program. The Survey will provide a baseline measure against which changes implemented over the period of the Maternity Services Program may be assessed.

The specific study objectives are to:

- assess women's satisfaction with antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care;
- investigate whether there have been any changes in women's views and experiences of maternity care since the previous surveys conducted in 1989 and 1993/94;
- assess and contrast the experiences of women and satisfaction of women using different models of care;
- monitor the impact of shorter hospital stays on women's health and emotional well-being, duration of breastfeeding and occurrence of feeding problems;
- assess women's satisfaction with postnatal domiciliary visits; and determine the extent to which women perceive midwife home visits address their needs for support and information in the first week at home.

All Victorian public and private maternity hospitals and home birth practitioners with births in the study period assisted with mailing out questionnaires to women who gave birth in two weeks in September 1999. A total of 1616 valid questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 67%.

Six interim reports have been produced for the Department of Human Services. The final report of the project was submitted in mid June. Three short reports based on the study findings are currently being prepared for wider dissemination. Women who took part in the study will be sent a pamphlet summarising key findings together with information about how to obtain copies of the short reports currently in preparation. The study is being written up for publication in refereed journals.

Copies of reports can be purchased phone: (03) 8341 8500

Further information: contact Stephanie Brown on (03) 8341 8500