

## Smile Mum Study: Evaluation of 'Smile Mum'- a program to improve the oral health of pregnant women and reduce the risk of oral disease for them and their child.

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### Background

A pregnant woman's oral health has implications for her child both before and after its birth. Good oral health during pregnancy is vital but not always a priority.

The Smile Mum Program, (SMP), is an oral health intervention for pregnant women.

The aims of this study were to determine whether SMP resulted in improved access to dental services and better oral health for the study participants. It also examined whether the program increased knowledge of maternal oral health links to pregnancy outcomes and to early childhood caries. Finally it explored the participant satisfaction with the program components.

### Methods

The study participants, n=17, were selected from women who completed both the pre and post natal SMP appointments. All participants were holders of a government concession card and the participation rate was 49% of those invited.

The study compared results from the Smile Mum data base which collected pre and post natal oral examination and lifestyle data.

As well, a 28 question, Likert scaled survey was distributed to the participants asking about their knowledge of mother and baby oral health links, their current oral health practices and their Smile Mum experience.

### Results

The study showed that the SMP increased access to dental treatment for most participants and that ante natal health providers were an important referral pathway. There was a high level of satisfaction with the program and most had increased knowledge of maternal and child oral health links. The pre and post natal comparison showed that there was an overall improvement in oral hygiene and a significant improvement in the oral disease risk assessment scores pre and post program.

### Conclusions

The Smile Mum Study provided a small but important body of evidence to support the value of oral health intervention for pregnant women in public oral health services. Whilst modest improvements were seen in clinical data, the overall increased oral health knowledge and improved attitude to dental treatment should result in a decrease in the risk of oral disease for the participants and their children. The study also demonstrated the value of the oral health practitioner as a smoking cessation counsellor. This report recommends a continuation of the SMP that includes a screening for the caries status of the children at age five.

*For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on 'view completed projects'*

Elizabeth has worked for most of her career in the area of public dental health as both a Dental Therapist and a Dental Hygienist. Her main contribution has been in providing dental treatment and targeted oral health programs to children of the rural area of Deniliquin. Her more recent work has involved oral health preventative and treatment strategies for at risk pregnant women and their families, further developed by the opportunities provided in the RRCPB. She has recently taken up a position at Charles Sturt University Wagga Wagga as a lecturer into the Bachelor of Oral Health Science.

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