

# Media Release

SA Health

29 July 2016



## **NEW RESEARCH TO IMPROVE HEALTH OF ABORIGINAL MOTHERS AND BABIES**

The Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN) is hosting new research to improve the nutritional health of Aboriginal mothers and babies during and after pregnancy.

The research, funded by a near \$1 million grant, will involve distributing "mother and baby bundles" to families enrolled in the Aboriginal Family Birthing Program at the Women's and Children's Hospital and at Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS) centres throughout South Australia.

Associate Professor Philippa Middleton, principal research fellow at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), is leading the research alongside co-investigators Deanna Stuart-Butler and Jackie Ah Kit from the Women's and Children's Health Network.

"Good nutrition during pregnancy can prevent short and long-term health problems for women and their children, and contribute to breaking intergenerational cycles of obesity and chronic disease," Associate Professor Philippa Middleton said.

"Thanks to a special National Health and Medical Research Council grant of \$975,882, we now have a rare opportunity to work alongside Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Care workers and Aboriginal families to fill crucial knowledge gaps in the nutritional status and needs of Aboriginal women.

"If the research collaboration is successful in achieving its aims, the results will likely have a significant and long-lasting impact on policy and practice in the field of Aboriginal health."

Associate Professor Middleton said that the mother and baby bundles will be given to women at key milestones during pregnancy and during the first year of their baby's life.

"The bundles may contain fruit and vegetable packs, baby care items, hand breast pumps and vouchers for healthy food," she said.

"They will be accompanied by a range of information and tools to assist mothers with breastfeeding and healthy eating in the antenatal and postnatal periods.

"Healthy eating is extremely important as excessive gestational weight gain and retention of weight after giving birth can have profound consequences for a woman's health in pregnancy and later life, including diabetes, hypertension, caesarean section, macrosomia and stillbirth.

"There are also health risks for the child that can span from conception through to adulthood and can become trans-generational."

The research is being conducted in partnership with the Aboriginal Family Birthing Program at the Women's and Children's Hospital (WCH) and the Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS).

Additional researchers from SAHMRI, WCHN, the University of Adelaide and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute will also collaborate on the project.

### For more information

Call the WCHN Media Line

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