

## DIABETES across the LIFECOURSE: Northern Australia Partnership

### Our Research Highlights for Policy and Practice

### Northern Territory Edition – October 2021

This Diabetes across the Lifecourse: Northern Australian Partnership (Partnership) brief provides an overview of recent Partnership publications (from October 2020 to September 2021).

Further resources are available on our website, including recordings from sessions held during the 2021 Virtual Annual Educational Symposium. These can be accessed here:

<https://diabeteslifecourse.org.au>

*Should you have any questions, or require further information, please contact us on [diabetespartnership@menzies.edu.au](mailto:diabetespartnership@menzies.edu.au) or ring (08) 8946 8698*

#### **No Sugar' no junk food', 'do more exercise'- moving beyond simple messages to improve the health of Aboriginal women with Hyperglycaemia in Pregnancy in the Northern Territory – A phenomenological study.**

**Published in:** Women Birth 2020 Oct 31;S1871-5192(20)30360-7. doi: 10.1016/j.wombi.2020.10.003.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/ii/S1871519220303607>

**Authors:** Kirkham R, King S, Graham S, Boyle JA, Whitbread C, Skinner T, Rumbold A, Maple-Brown LJ

Interviews were conducted with Aboriginal women and health professionals (in 2017), focusing on how Aboriginal women with hyperglycaemia in pregnancy understand and experience this condition, and how their care can be improved. Participants could recite simple health messaging regarding diabetes (e.g., 'no sugar'), but many lacked in-depth knowledge and this affected the management of their condition. Many identified pregnancy as a powerful motivator for change, signalling scope to improve health messaging. Women consistently expressed the need for diabetes education that was culturally appropriate, a clear desire for maternity care that was family-centred, based on respectful relationships with the same care provider, and respected Aboriginal ways of knowing and being. Findings suggest that existing health messaging around hyperglycaemia in pregnancy has limited reach with Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory. Ongoing commitment is needed to enhance design of maternity and diabetes care, incorporating the cultural and social context of women's lives.

#### **Exploring differences in perceptions of child feeding practices between parents and health care professionals: a qualitative study**

**Published in** BMC Public Health, 2021, 21:1449.

<https://bmcpuublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-11493-2>

**Authors:** Rohit A, Kirkham R, McCarthy L, Puruntatameri V, Maple-Brown LJ, and Brimblecombe J.

The current study explored existing child feeding practices from the perspective of Aboriginal parents, families, and health service providers across six communities in the NT. Parents highly valued development of child independence in food behaviour but found it challenging with the easy access to unhealthy food in their communities. This easy access to unhealthy food and inadequate food storage and kitchen facilities for some families were major challenges to achieving optimal diets for children, described by Aboriginal families and service providers. The responsive style of parenting described by parents was often misunderstood by service providers as sub-optimal parenting when viewed through a dominant western lens. Along with a community-based Aboriginal health workforce, it is paramount that the non-Aboriginal workforce be supported to be reflective of the impact of worldview on their practice, to ensure a culturally safe environment for families where parenting styles are understood and appropriately supported.



## Screening rates for diabetic retinopathy among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with hyperglycaemia in pregnancy: The PANDORA cohort study

Published in: Clinical and Experimental Ophthalmology, 2021, 1-3. Clin Exp Ophthalmol. 2021 Aug 19. doi: 10.1111/ceo.13985. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ceo.13985>

Authors: Rohit A, Roulston T, Henderson T, Lee I, Webster V, McIntyre HD, Connors C, Brown A, Shaw JE, Maple-Brown LJ, Barr ELM.

This paper reports diabetic retinopathy screening rates among Aboriginal women with pre-existing type 2 diabetes in pregnancy, or with diabetes in pregnancy (who met diagnostic criteria for type 2 diabetes but first diagnosed in pregnancy). The study reports low rates or inadequate documentation of diabetic retinopathy screening during pregnancy among the Aboriginal women with pre-existing type 2 diabetes. Our findings indicate the need to strengthen diabetic retinopathy screening guidelines for pregnant women with diabetes, particularly for women who live remotely, and the implementation of guidelines into standard care and continuous quality improvement activities.

## Rethinking third trimester ultrasound measurements and risk of adverse neonatal outcomes in pregnancies complicated by hyperglycaemia: a retrospective study

Published in *NZ Journal Obstet Gynaecol* 2021 Jun;61(3):366-372. doi: 0.1111/ajo.13281

<https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajo.13281>

Authors: McLean A, Katz M, Oats J, Wang Z, Barr ELMB, Maple-Brown LJ

Antenatal ultrasound is used frequently in order to help make treatment decisions; however, it is unclear which measurements have the greatest association with adverse neonatal outcomes in pregnancies complicated by hyperglycaemia. This retrospective study assessed the association between abdominal circumference (AC) and estimated fetal weight (EFW) measurements with a composite adverse neonatal outcome. All pregnant women with gestational or type 2 diabetes (n=275) who birthed in a regional hospital over 12 months were included.

The results showed that third trimester ultrasound measurements of AC and EFW up to the 30th percentile may pose just as great a risk to the fetus as an AC or EFW >95th percentile. It is important that clinicians take into consideration the skewed distribution of fetal size in pregnancies complicated by hyperglycaemia when determining level of risk for the fetus.

**Thank you to all our partners for your support.**

**To view other partnership publications and materials, please visit our website:**

**[www.diabeteslifecourse.org.au/publications](http://www.diabeteslifecourse.org.au/publications)**

## 2021 Virtual Annual Educational Symposium Communities Leading the Way: Engaging and Guiding Research

This year's Annual Educational Symposium was another great success, with over 230 people registering from across Australia and Internationally. Thank you to our guest speakers and those who attended.

Keynote speakers included **Associate Professor Treena Delormier** (McGill University, Canada) along with **Professor Alex Brown** and **Dr Karla Canuto** (South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute, Adelaide). Topics covered were partnering with schools for diabetes prevention, designing physical activity programs, how communities are informing and guiding research, along with lived experiences of being a health practitioner and the effects of mental health in relation to diabetes.

**Recordings have been posted on our website:**

**<https://diabeteslifecourse.org.au/resources/symposium>**

## New Resources have been added to our website.

View Dhalaleena's Diabetes Story. Dhalaleena is a Groote Eylandt woman who works as an Aboriginal Health practitioner with Top End Regional Health Service. View her diabetes story here:

**[Health Professional Resources - Diabetes across the Lifecourse \(diabeteslifecourse.org.au\)](http://diabeteslifecourse.org.au)**

*\*(This video is owned and produced by the Primary Health Care Urban Department, Top End Regional Health Service, Northern Territory Department of Health.)*