



## Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles

Newsletter No.1 / 2012

Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) recently received funding from the Department of Health to implement a program that focuses on capacity building of the health and early childhood workforce to improve the oral health of children 0-3 years and pregnant women.

Dental decay is the most prominent chronic disease for children. Early childhood dental decay influences long term oral health as well as general health and wellbeing. The primary teeth are very important to children's development. Pregnancy is an important time for women to look after their oral health. Pregnant women are at increased risk of gum disease and links exist between advanced gum disease and premature and low birth weight babies.<sup>i</sup> Poor maternal oral health is also associated with early childhood caries in children. Health and early childhood professionals are well placed to engage with parents and carers about oral health.

### ***Stakeholder consultation***

We have consulted with more than 150 organisations from health, education, early childhood and community sectors. About 30 organisations have contributed to the project planning process through an on-line survey as well as face-to-face meetings. A project plan has been developed and work is now focused on a more detailed needs assessment where we will prioritise strategies for the identified groups over the next three years. A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to the planning process, your input has been invaluable. We are excited to announce that the first three Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles (HFHS) initiatives; the trialling of the Midwifery Initiated Oral Health (MIOH) e-learning package, early parenting centres partnership and trialling of the targeted tooth packs, are well underway.

### ***Trial of an on-line training package for midwives***

The MIOH e-learning package is a collaborative partnership with the Centre for Applied Nursing Research, University of Western Sydney and South Western Sydney Local Health District. This trial program is the first of its kind in Victoria. The content has been reviewed to ensure its relevance in Victoria and over 30 midwives working in antenatal care have registered for the trial. The training aims to increase oral health knowledge, oral health assessments, referrals to dental services and oral health advice for clients.<sup>ii</sup>

### ***Partnering with early parenting centres***

We have had our first working group meeting with representatives from the O'Connell Family Centre, Tweddle Child and Family Health Service and Queen Elizabeth Centre to begin the planning of the training package. These three organisations have agreed to work with HFHS to develop a training package for their staff that incorporates oral health into the live-in programs conducted with parents and young children.

### ***Tooth packs trial***

Evidence shows that the targeted provision of fluoride toothpaste and toothbrushes can contribute to reducing tooth decay. We are working in partnership with Maternal and Child Health (M&CH) Services to trial the tooth packs initiative in four local government areas. Toothbrushes and age-appropriate fluoride toothpaste is provided to all family members (adults and children) when they see their M&CH Nurse at the 18 month and 2 year visit.

Eight-hundred and fifteen families have received a tooth pack and the second phase has just begun. Evaluation of the trial is being conducted by the Australian Population Health Improvement Research Strategy for Oral Health and is due for completion mid 2013.

### ***Further information***

To speak to one of the Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles team please contact us via the following details. If you no longer wish to receive updates about the program please let us know by reply email.

Gillian Lang  
Health Promotion Project Officer  
P: 9341 1162  
E: [gillian.lang@dhsv.org.au](mailto:gillian.lang@dhsv.org.au)

Jo Payne  
Health Promotion Project Officer  
P: 9341 1722  
E: [joanne.payne@dhsv.org.au](mailto:joanne.payne@dhsv.org.au)

Allison Ridge  
Health Promotion Program Coordinator  
P: 9341 1144  
E: [allison.ridge@dhsv.org.au](mailto:allison.ridge@dhsv.org.au)

### ***References***

---

- <sup>i</sup> George A, Johnson M, Blinkhorn A, Ellis S, Bhole S and Ajwani S, (2010) 'Promoting oral health during pregnancy: current evidence and implications for Australian midwives', *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 19, 3324-3333.
- <sup>ii</sup> George A, Duff M, Ajwani S, Johnson M, Dahlen H, Blinkhorn A, Ellis S, Bhole S (2012) 'Development of an Online Education Program for Midwives in Australia to Improve Perinatal Oral Health'. *Journal of Perinatal Education* 21 (2) 112-122.