

Newsletter

2000 Stories

August 2008

Hello everyone!

It has been over a year since we last sent an update on 2000 Stories, so there's lots of news to share.

THANK YOU!

We are delighted that close to 80% of participants who first joined the study completed interviews for our 9th follow-up. This is an incredible achievement and we appreciate the time and effort you give to this study. By sharing your stories with us over so many years, this study is now the richest source of information of its kind in Australia.

Grant Awarded to Study on Pregnancy and Childhood

As most of you will now be aware, we received a grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to follow children born to study participants. The study involves completing a survey during pregnancy (at around 32 weeks) and then again at 8 weeks and 12 months after the birth of your child. The purpose is to understand how adolescent and young adult lifestyle factors shape the health and wellbeing of the next generation.

A number of you (both Mums and Dads) have already joined this new study and have shared your experiences of pregnancy and the highs and lows of parenthood. We are enormously grateful for your time and understand how difficult it can be to find time to speak to us while caring for very young children.

Thank you also to all those parents who have told us about children who are more than 12 months old. We hope to begin catching up with you very soon.

Third Generation Study

We are excited about our funding from the Perpetual Trustee Company to invite grandparents to share their stories with us. For many people, becoming a grandparent is an exciting experience and provides an opportunity to enjoy children all over again. But we understand it is not without challenges: be they financial, emotional or health problems and we would like to learn more about how grandparents feel about their growing family. We will soon be contacting all 2000 Stories participants who have children to see if parents might be interested in taking part.

Please note that this will be a one-off study with grandparents.



HAPPY 30TH BIRTHDAY!!!!

If you would like to share your thoughts about turning 30 please drop us a line at 2000stories@mcri.edu.au. We will try to include some of your ideas in the next newsletter.



WE NEED YOUR HELP

To successfully undertake these unique intergenerational studies, **we need your help!**

First, we need to find ALL pregnancies that occur in any one year (that's about 200). This is an enormous challenge and one that

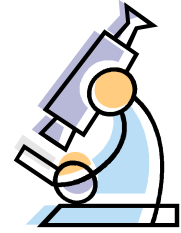
no other research group worldwide has attempted.

We believe the only way to find every pregnancy is to contact all participants twice yearly. This contact will occur by phone, email or SMS and will only take a few moments of your time.

For the majority of you who are NOT expecting children now; in the near future or at all, we especially ask for your patience and support. Our contact with you will be your chance to tell us whether any of your contact details have changed.

It is important that we keep in touch with everyone in the study regardless of whether you are planning children or not.

If you and your partner are currently expecting a baby and you haven't already let us know, we would love to hear from you. Feel free to contact us anytime on 1800 706 101 (free call) or at 2000stories@mcri.edu.au



SOME FINDINGS.....

You may be interested to know what we do with all the information you have shared with us over the years.

One way we share results is through the popular media (newspapers, television, radio). This is an important way to make sure the things you have told us lead to changes in community understanding and practice.

Recently, our research on self-harm among young women received coverage in the Melbourne newspapers (The Age, June 4) and on radio and television. We hope this may lead to improved community awareness about the particular difficulties faced by young women in the middle teen years.

Here are some summaries of our recent published research findings...



1

Do Teen Smokers Become Adult Smokers?

The answer is YES! We found that about a quarter of all teenagers told us they smoked cigarettes on a daily basis between the ages of 14 and 17. And teen smokers did become adult smokers! Incredibly, we found 80% of those who had been daily smokers during the teens were still smoking at 24 years of age.

And we didn't just look at tobacco smoking. We also found a connection between smoking cigarettes during adolescence and cannabis use during adulthood. It turns out that nearly two-thirds of all 24 year olds who told us about high rates of cannabis use had been daily tobacco smokers as teenagers.

(Patton, Coffey, Carlin, Sawyer, and Wakefield: Journal of Adolescent Health, 2006)

If you would like support, advice or information on how to quit smoking call the Quitline on 13 78 48



The Consequences of Teenage Drug Use

We found around 7% of participants had used amphetamines such as speed by the age of 17 years. This particular group of adolescents were also more likely to use other substances as well such as alcohol, tobacco and cannabis.

And we did find links between the use of amphetamines during adolescence and adult health problems. These problems included high rates of drug dependence and mental health problems at age 24.

However, many problems that we first thought were because of teen amphetamine use may actually be a result of teenagers using cannabis at an even younger age. This means that smoking cannabis during early adolescence can lead to a range of possible health problems, including the uptake of amphetamines.

We don't know why teenagers who smoke cannabis might go on to use other illicit substances. But we need to do more work to find out why some young people who experiment with drugs during their teens go on to experience drug dependence and a range of other health concerns.

(Degenhardt, Coffey, Moran, Carlin, and Patton: *Addiction*, 2007)



Body Image Concerns in Adolescence Can Have Long-Term Impacts

We know that very severe anorexia and bulimia can cause long term health problems. But we know much less about teenagers who report minor problems with their body weight and body image.

We found that nearly one in ten girls between the ages of 15 and 17 reported being underweight and fearful of weight gain. Girls were much more likely to report these problems than boys of the same age.

The good news is that, for most girls, these issues did not progress to more serious eating disorders over time. But as it turns out, problems with weight and body image during adolescence can affect a range of health and social issues later in life.

We found some girls who reported weight and body size concerns in their mid teens were still underweight in their mid 20's. This same group of girls also reported some difficulties dealing with depression and anxiety, as well as alcohol and tobacco use.

(Patton, Coffey, Carlin, Sanci and Sawyer: *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 2008)



Feeling Stressed? It Might be in Your Genes

During the last few rounds of interviewing, we asked everyone to provide us with a DNA sample. And we can now start to share with you some of our research into genes and the role they play in contributing to how we behave and how we feel.

One of the first things we looked at is the way two genes (known as COMT and 5HTT) work together to help control our feelings of stress and anxiety. These particular genes have been of interest to researchers for some time now because they are thought to play an important part in feelings of depression and anxiety.

We found the way these two genes interact with each other helps us understand why some people feel anxious and others don't even when they may have experienced similar kinds of stressful events. It turns out that the combined action of these genes plays a very important role in our health and well being.

(Olsson, Byrnes, Anney, Collins, Hemphill, Williamson and Patton: Genes, Brain and Behavior, 2007)

If you would like more information on any of these research findings, please don't hesitate to contact us on 1800 706 101 (free call) or at 2000stories@mcri.edu.au

KEEPING IN TOUCH

It is very important for us to keep in touch with everyone in the study. Please let us know if your contact details change. You can do this in a number of ways



Phone free-call: 1800 706 101

Email: 2000Stories@mcri.edu.au

Website: mcri.edu.au/2000Stories



Our website needs a bit of work at the moment, so please accept our apologies if some information is not yet up-to-date or under construction when you visit.