

# 2000 stories Victorian Adolescent Health Cohort Study

Centre for Adolescent Health, Royal Children's Hospital

Newsletter Summer 2010/2011

Thank you all once again for working with us on the 2000 stories project. We value your ongoing participation greatly. It is hard to believe that the project's 20th anniversary is now not too far away; this is a milestone. There have been many important findings from the study across many aspects of health and well-being, from adolescence to adulthood. Without your contribution this would not have been possible.

## What have you been up to this year?

What an active bunch you are! You might be interested to know that 5% of you now live overseas, mostly in Great Britain, the USA, and New Zealand. For those of you still living down under, 9% have moved to a different state, with the Sunshine State coming out on top – 3% of you now reside in Queensland.

The "next generation" phase of the study is now into its fourth year. As many of you already know, this new focus is on your health as a parent, as well as the start to life your baby has. We are particularly interested in the kind of relationship you and your partner developed with your child as well as their adjustment in the first phase of life.

Thanks to your openness and willingness to participate, we have now identified 726 children to 567 participants. About 57% of these new parents have had one child, 40% have had two children, and 3% have had three. Our excitement grows as we continue to identify more of your children by the day! We are especially grateful for the time and energy that you and your partners have given us for this aspect of the project – we know that you lead busy lives and that time is precious when there are little ones to be cared for. For all those newly involved partners, welcome, and congratulations for taking part in what we believe is a world first study!

## What's happened at 2000 stories this year?

### In the media

No doubt some of you have noticed the 2000 stories project whilst mulling over the daily newspaper at breakfast, or when listening to the radio on the way to work.

From September to November alone, findings from the project were published in major Australian and International newspapers, reported on TV, and talked about on the radio. For instance, in September our findings about changes in weight between the teens and twenties received nationwide coverage. In November, our findings around alcohol use were referenced multiple times in relation to schoolies week.

## What other important findings have you contributed to?

2000 stories has published some very important research papers this year. A few of these papers are summarised overleaf to give you a taste of the groundbreaking research that could not have been possible without you. Abstracts of all publications from the project are available on our website.

## What have our Chief Investigators been up to?

Our Chief Investigators, George Patton and Craig Olsson, have been very busy, working on a range of projects including 2000 stories. Between them, George and Craig have recently won four important research funding grants! We are very excited that one of these grants is for a 20-year follow-up of our very own 2000 stories project, while another is for us to continue our "next generation" study.

## What's coming up?

Of course we are still very interested in what you, the original participants, are experiencing in your daily lives. As previously mentioned, we have been granted funding to conduct a tenth wave of research on the original participant cohort. This is proposed to begin in 2012 – the project's 20th anniversary year. We are planning to look at how you have managed the transition to your mid-thirties, and what effect this may have had on your health and well-being ... so watch this space!

## Why is this project so important?

2000 stories is a one-of-a-kind project, and your participation really does help to make a difference! Back in 1992, we surveyed a representative cross-section of adolescents from every corner of the Victorian community; this means our findings can be applied to young Australians from all walks of life. The fact that you have allowed us to follow you for so long is also a critical component of the success of this study. Your experiences across time help us to put together a comprehensive picture of health from adolescence to adulthood. This broader picture is crucial when forming new interventions and policies for young Australians.

### Winners for 2010!

Congratulations to the 8 winners of the \$100 gift vouchers: Suzanne, Fiona, Tom, Mark, Jade, Marie, Leanne and Noelia.

A big thank you must also go out to everyone else who updated their details on the online form, via email or over the telephone.

# What important findings have you contributed to?

These are just a few of the important 2000 stories research papers that have been published this year. Please see our website for further details of these and other publications made possible by your input.

## Overweight and Obesity Between Adolescence and Young Adulthood: A 10-year Prospective Cohort Study

### What did we look at?

Whether there were any changes and/or continuity in overweight and obesity between adolescence and young adulthood.

### What did we find?

- Substantial shifts in overweight and obesity occurred between adolescence and young adulthood: the proportion of overweight individuals increased from 20% in mid-adolescence to 33% at age 24 years, whilst obesity almost doubled, increasing from 3.6% to 6.7%.
- Few participants who were obese or persistently overweight in adolescence went on to achieve a normal weight in young adulthood – participants were more likely to achieve normal weight in young adulthood if they were less persistently overweight as teenagers.

### What does this mean?

These findings suggest that late adolescence is a danger zone for putting on unhealthy amounts of weight that is subsequently hard to lose. Intervention and prevention in this subgroup of young people would be beneficial for ensuring healthier body weight later in life.

## Cannabis Use and Educational Achievement: Findings From Three Australasian Cohort Studies

### What did we look at?

This study used data from 2000 stories, as well as two other studies from Queensland and New Zealand, to investigate the association between the age participants first used cannabis and their level of educational achievement.

### What did we find?

- The age that participants first used cannabis was highly related to whether participants completed high school, enrolled in university, or attained a degree; participants who used cannabis before the age of 15 had significantly lower educational attainment than those who had not used cannabis by age 18.
- Cannabis use was found to have a greater detrimental effect on university participation for males than females.

### What does this mean?

These findings add to a growing body of evidence that suggests that early cannabis use may be associated with increased risk for a number of adverse outcomes including reduced educational achievement, increased risk of mental health problems, and illicit drug use.

## Association of Adolescent Symptoms of Depression and Anxiety With Daily Smoking and Nicotine Dependence In Young Adulthood: Findings From A 10-year Longitudinal Study

### What did we look at?

Whether there was an association between adolescent depression and anxiety symptoms, and daily smoking and nicotine dependence in young adulthood.

### What did we find?

- Adolescents who smoked and had high levels of depression and anxiety symptoms were two to three times more likely to be nicotine dependent in adulthood than adolescents who smoked but had low levels of depression and anxiety symptoms.

### What does this mean?

These findings show that symptoms of depression and anxiety in adolescence significantly alter the course of smoking and predict progression to nicotine dependence, well after leaving secondary school.

These findings highlight the importance of investing in mental health interventions in adolescence and young adulthood, to help those young adults who might be at risk for greater tobacco use.

## Keeping in contact with you

It is already seven years since we last spoke with you all about your health and lifestyle. We hope to speak to you all again next year when many of you turn 35.

We are pleased that so many of you have chosen to still be a part of the study. Your continued involvement remains of the utmost importance to us. Each and every one of you is irreplaceable! We are making every effort to keep your contact information up-to-date, in a way that takes as little of your time as possible. For your convenience, we have developed an automated system that sends you a personalised email once every six months. This email connects you to a secure online form where you can update your details and let us know if you or your partner is pregnant, or have recently had a baby.

If you are not expecting children now or in the future, we once again ask for your patience. It is still important that we have your up-to-date details so that we can ask for your involvement in our next exciting stage of the project.

Please note that you can contact us at any stage to let us know that your personal details have changed, by:

**Tel:** 1800 706 101 (free call) OR

**E-mail:** [2000stories@mcri.edu.au](mailto:2000stories@mcri.edu.au)

For information about the project please see our website: <http://www.mcri.edu.au/pages/2000-stories>