

Access and Equity

Chair | Dom Ennis, YSAS

1. A dual diagnosis partnership: filling a gap in psychiatric units
2. Nurse practitioners advancing decentralised Hepatitis C care in opioid treatment
3. Pre and post-natal care experiences of women who inject drugs

"I wasn't aware that using went through the breast milk" Exploring the pre- and post-natal care experiences of women who inject drugs in Victoria

BEK PETROVIC, TEAM LEAD - FIELDWORK

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FEB 2025



Burnet
reach for the many



AT BURNET INSTITUTE WE
PROUDLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE
BOON WURRUNG PEOPLE OF
THE KULIN NATIONS AS THE
TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE
LAND ON WHICH OUR OFFICE
IS LOCATED. WE PAY OUR
RESPECTS TO ELDERS PAST,
PRESENT, AND EXTEND THAT
RESPECT TO ALL FIRST
NATIONS PEOPLE



What we know about women who inject drugs

- 2.8 million women globally who inject drugs
- Women more commonly report childhood trauma and gender-based violence
- More likely than men to live with and care for children
- More likely to report exchanging sex for money/drugs
- There is evidence of women who use drugs experiencing
 - unintended pregnancies and terminations²
 - poor pregnancy outcomes^{3,4}





Services don't meet the specific gendered needs of women



Limited research examining the sexual and reproductive health needs of women who inject drugs



Not identified as a priority population in the current Victorian women's sexual and reproductive health plan 2022–30



Study Aim

The study aimed to understand the sexual and reproductive health needs of women who use drugs and the topics of investigation included:



Reproductive health



Barriers accessing and using healthcare services



Importance of non-judgemental healthcare responses



Sexual activity



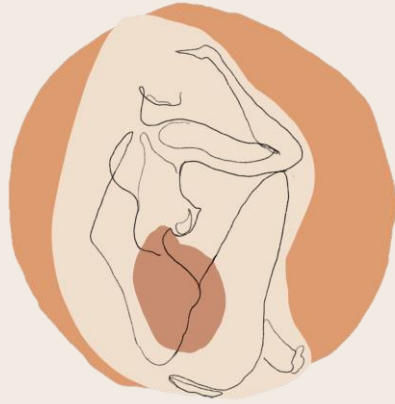
Pregnancy and post-natal care



Research methods

- Study conducted by Women's Health Special Interest Group at Burnet Institute
- Qualitative research design involving in-depth interviews
- Interviews were all conducted by women
- Data collection Oct – Nov 2023
- Eligibility for the study included:
 - Recruited from SuperMIX and VMAX
 - reported use of any drugs within the past 12 months
 - residing in Melbourne or regional/rural Victoria at the time of interview

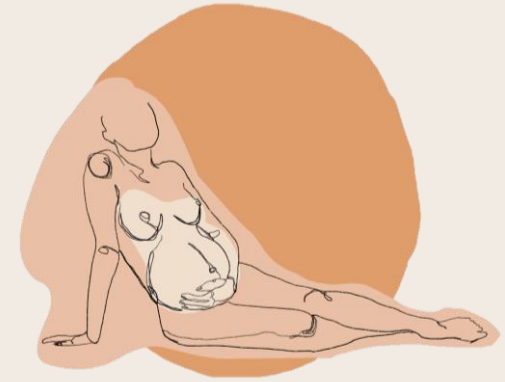




9 of 10 women were mothers



Most became mothers in their late teens




Most breastfed at least one of their babies



Challenges and Stigma

- Significant challenges with healthcare system during pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period
- Multiple layers of stigma impacting experiences



“ I wasn’t aware that using [heroin] went through the breastmilk ... Luckily, nothing ever happened, but I wasn’t given any information, and it’s not like I was saying, ‘Hey, I use’.”

Sarah



Barriers to seeking support

- Untrusting of health providers for fear of child removal

“ We need somebody that doesn't go straight to Child Protection, that you can work with the person because if I had that, if I had somebody that I could talk to and work with, I believe I would've opened up and I could have got help that way, but I was too scared. ”

Emily,





A mothers love...

- Reflections of joy
- Connectedness to their baby through feeding

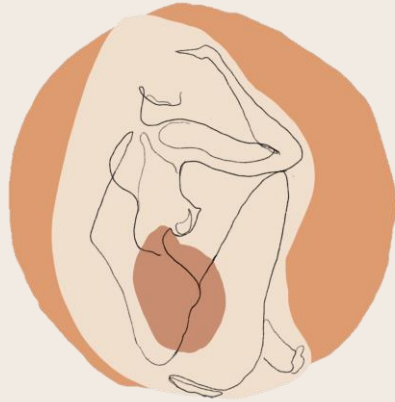


*“ I loved looking after them.
That’s what kept me going
every day. That’s what gave
me something to do.*

Penny, ”



Key messages



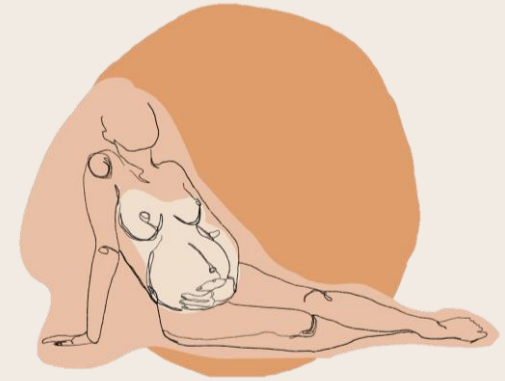
Continuity of Care

Building trusting
relationships



Support Groups

It takes a village,
but where is it?



We need to know

more

More research is
needed



time for
reflection

Acknowledgments



- Funded by Jean Hailes Foundation
- The Burnet's Women's Health Special Interest Group
- AOD Fieldwork Team
- The women involved in the study





Thank you

Open her with an open heart-
for her story will leave you a gift.
Write it down, but most of all,
let her sentiments
provoke change....

Tess Guinery

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