The development of a culturally secure family-based support program for Aboriginal fathers in Western Australia.

**BACKGROUND:**
Research spanning two decades has identified that perinatal depression is associated with a range of long term negative outcomes that affect the mother, the father, the child, family and society (Buist et al., 2002; Murray et al., 1996)
- Few published studies about rates of perinatal depression in Aboriginal communities.
- Even less information about how Aboriginal fathers cope with new parenthood.

**DEFINITION:**
Perinatal depression encompasses major and minor depressive episodes that occur either during pregnancy or within the first 12 months following delivery (Gaynes et al., 2005).

**ISSUES:**
- Perinatal depression in fathers results in poorer outcomes for children;
- Fathers who are positively involved in the care of their children contributes to more effective recovery of mothers who are depressed; and,
- If fathers and extended family members are involved in the care of the infant this may act as a protective factor when the mother is experiencing perinatal depression (New South Wales Men’s Action Plan 2009-2012).

**METHODS:**
Community participatory action research utilising quantitative and qualitative methods.
- Expert Advisory Group
- Aboriginal father mentors/facilitators (yarning/focus groups)
- Surveys

**OBJECTIVES AND AIMS OF THE STUDY:**
- Enhance the perinatal mental health of Aboriginal families in the urban Swan and regional Kalgoorlie-Boulder areas;
- Build the capacity of Aboriginal and new expectant fathers and their families;
- Develop and validate culturally inclusive Aboriginal concepts of perinatal mental health;
- Develop and implement a culturally secure family-based support program for Aboriginal new and expectant parents with a specific focus on fathers; and,
- Build the capacity of Aboriginal researchers through the active recruitment processes of the research team.

**PRACTICAL OUTCOMES:**
- Production of culturally validated concepts about Aboriginal parental and family wellbeing;
- Localised programs that may have national policy and program relevance; and
- Effective knowledge translation through strong partnerships with multi-disciplinary and multi-sector composition of the research team and Expert Advisory Groups.

**BROAD RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**
- What are the culturally validated concepts that describe Aboriginal parental and family wellbeing during the perinatal phase?
- What are the processes, approaches and informational content that will underpin culturally secure, effective, holistic and family-based support programs for new and expectant Aboriginal parents?
- What are the processes, approaches and informational content that will contribute to the development of culturally secure, effective and locally relevant parenting support programs that specifically meet the needs of Aboriginal fathers?
- How can current screening tools such as the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) be adapted to meet the needs of Aboriginal fathers and their families?