

MONASH University  
Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

**the women's**  
the royal women's hospital

Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne  
Pregnancy Advisory Service (PAS)  
Women's Social Support Services

Women with Cognitive Impairment's experience of unplanned or unwanted pregnancy

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Women with cognitive impairment's experience of unplanned or unwanted pregnancy at the RWH

**• Background**

- Presenter background – Royal Women's Hospital and Women's Individual Needs pregnancy care clinic
- Pregnancy Advisory Service (PAS)
- Women with cognitive impairment – sexuality and pregnancy
- Issues for women with unplanned or unwanted pregnancy

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**• Methodology**

- Rationale for the study
- Aim of clinical audit
- Methodology
  - > Data collected for 2005-2007
  - > Findings contrasted with unpublished data of all women who accessed Pregnancy Advisory Service in 2006

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**• Demographics**

- Total of 20 women with cognitive impairment identified
- 15 women (75%) were 25 years and under, compared with 44% of all women who accessed PAS in 2006
- No woman with cognitive impairment lived in disability accommodation

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**• Issues**

- Low number of women with cognitive impairment identified
- Reliance on other people to contact the PAS
- Late recognition of pregnancy
- Contact too late for option of abortion
- Delayed decision-making and contact with the PAS

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**• Late recognition of pregnancy**

- Nine women (45%) contacted the PAS at 12 weeks gestation or later, compared with 20% of all women who accessed PAS in 2006
- Issues with late recognition of pregnancy

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- **Pregnancy recognized too late for options**

- Five women (25%) were at 18+ gestation when PAS was contacted, compared with less than 2% of all women who accessed PAS in 2006
- Two of the above five women had several children and did not recognize pregnancy signs

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- **Delayed decision-making**

- Four women delayed 4+ weeks
- Reliance on others assistance
- Impact of family / partner's wishes
- 3 women did not proceed and lost family / partner support
- 2 women attended PAS only through worker intervention / assistance

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- **Outcomes**

- Ten women (50%) proceeded with abortion compared with 80% of all women who accessed PAS in 2006

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- **Implications**

- Greater support to access contraception and health services – especially younger women
- More appropriate and ongoing education and information on sexual and reproductive health is needed – especially recognizing pregnancy
- Woman's wishes are not always supported by family / partner and formal services and support may be needed



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