

New assessment of preschool mental health trialled

April 13 2017, by Pepita Smyth

Murdoch University hosted Australia's first training for an innovative method of assessing the mental health of preschool aged children.

This assessment tool, the [Preschool Aged Psychiatric Assessment \(PAPA\)](#), uses semi-structured interviews to diagnose [psychiatric symptoms](#) in children up to five years of age.

Professor Megan Galbally, Murdoch University's Foundation Chair in Perinatal Psychiatry, hosted the four-day workshop by Brian Small from Duke University in the United States.

"PAPA training is widely used around the world on large studies of child [mental health](#) but this was the first opportunity for researchers to learn more about it in Australia," she said.

"The session was extremely informative and we putting the PAPA assessment tool into practice for the next stage of our research."

Professor Galbally and her colleague Associate Professor Andrew Lewis are leading the Mercy Pregnancy Emotional Wellbeing Study, a project that has followed 300 women from [pregnancy](#) through to now when their children are turning three years of age.

This study has examined many of the areas the development of the relationship between a mother and her child over pregnancy and into the postpartum period.

We have investigated a wide range of factors that may act to protect a mother against anxiety and depression over this period," Professor Galbally said.

"The PAPA assessment will now enable us to assess the mental [health](#) of the [children](#) born in this study."

Results from the MPEWS study will be released later this year.

Provided by Murdoch University

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