

# Giving rookie dads the online info they really need

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Dr. Deborah Da Costa is a scientist in the division of Clinical Epidemiology at the RI-MUHC and associate professor in the department of Medicine at McGill University. Credit: McGill University Health Centre

Expectant and new parents often turn to the internet for parenting prep,

but it turns out that dads often don't seem to find the information they say they need about pregnancy, parenthood and routes to their own mental health and well-being. Now, a new study from a Canadian team led by the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre (RI-MUHC) with funding from global men's health charity the [Movember Foundation](#) highlights just what soon-to-be and new fathers want to see in a dad-focused website and how best to meet those needs.

Researchers found that despite the considerable time the fathers in the study spent on the internet hunting down information on pregnancy and parenting, most said the information was not tailored to them. The study looked at what specific information those men wanted and what they felt was lacking, so they could better provide this in a website designed for dads.

"We have used these findings to guide the development of HealthyDads.ca, a prototype website that we have been pilot-testing since 2015 with expectant fathers to promote their [mental health](#) and better prepare them for the transition to parenthood," says the study's senior author Dr. Deborah Da Costa, scientist in the division of Clinical Epidemiology at the RI-MUHC and associate professor in the department of Medicine at McGill University.

The research team recruited 174 men in Montreal, Toronto, and Calgary over a six-month period and asked the expectant and new fathers to complete online questionnaires. The questionnaires measured the men's needs related to psychosocial aspects of the transition to parenthood, lifestyle behaviours, parenting, and factors associated with the decision to visit a father-focused website.

The findings recently published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research* indicate that men are seeking a broad spectrum of web-based information, including topics such as parenting/infant care, supporting

and improving relationships with their partners, work-family balance, managing stress, and improving sleep.

"We know that the transition into fatherhood is a time of significant life change for men, and many may experience a decline in their mental health and wellbeing as a result," adds Craig Martin, global director, Mental Health & Suicide Prevention - Movember Foundation. "It's critically important we identify ways to address the needs of men in this group and this study will help find new ways to reach men with the advice and support at this critical time in their lives. The Mo Bros and Mo Sistas of Canada are making research of this nature possible and we are so proud of the positive change they are having upon men's health."

According to Dr. Da Costa, who is also a researcher from the Metabolic Disorders and Complications Program at the RI-MUHC, the results of this latest research can help sharpen the effectiveness and usefulness of e-[health](#) pregnancy and parenting [information](#) for men, giving rookie dads the support they need and making their transition to fatherhood smoother.

**More information:** Deborah Da Costa et al, HealthyDads.ca: What Do Men Want in a Website Designed to Promote Emotional Wellness and Healthy Behaviors During the Transition to Parenthood?, *Journal of Medical Internet Research* (2017). [DOI: 10.2196/jmir.7415](https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.7415)

Provided by McGill University Health Centre

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