

30 year study uncovers linkages between mothers and their children's health

December 5 2012

Researchers at The University of Queensland have been documenting the lives of mothers and their children over 30 years to uncover what role genetic and environmental factors have on mental illness, substance abuse and heart disease.

The team of researchers led by UQ's School of [Population Health](#) and School of Social Science Professor Jake Najman said their latest study was investigating the causes of common mental disorders such as anxiety, depression and [substance use](#).

The study follows a sample of 4000 mothers and 4000 children, from birth to 30 years of age and one of the aims is to see the extent to which the mental health of the mother can predict the mental health of the child, when that child is the mother's age.

"The findings have shown over half of the 4000 Australian [young adults](#) involved in the study have ever had a diagnosable mental illness," Professor Najman said.

"The research will provide important information to influence the treatment and prevention of these disorders," he said.

The common [mental disorders](#) cumulatively make the largest contribution to morbidity in [developed countries](#) and despite this, relatively little is known about the factors that lead to the onset and recurrence of these disorders over the early [life span](#).

The research was conducted as part of the Mater-University Study of Pregnancy (MUSP), a [longitudinal study](#) of over 8000 mothers and their children born at Brisbane's Mater Hospital in Australia in 1981-83.

The research team already have detailed data on this sample of young adults from pregnancy, six months after the birth, five years, 14 years and 21 year follow-up data.

Participants have been asked to share information about their family life, substance abuse and any health issues they have had.

The research team are currently looking for another 4000 participants who were involved in the study, who have been lost over the duration of the study.

"We are looking to make contact with mothers or children who were involved in the initial study at The Mater Mothers Hospital back in 1981-83, who we haven't been able to contact to ensure the quality of our research and the validity of our findings," Professor Najman said.

More information: If you think you were one of the people who participated within the study and would like to be involved in the 30 year follow-up interviews please contact 1800 103 017 or visit the website on www.socialscience.uq.edu.au/musp

All papers that have been published on the Mater-University of Queensland Study of Pregnancy including 12 papers published in 2012 can be found at socialscience.uq.edu.au/musp-publications.

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: 30 year study uncovers linkages between mothers and their children's health (2012, December 5) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-12-year-uncovers-linkages-mothers-children.html>

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