

“Cyclone Babies”: Maternal Accounts of Pregnancy During Severe Cyclone Events in Queensland, Australia.

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Purpose

- We aimed to better understand the firsthand experiences of mothers pregnant during cyclones, how they derived meaning from their surroundings, and how this could influence their behavior.
- Identifying similarities and differences in individual experiences would provide insight into maternal vulnerability and resilience to cyclone stressors.

Background / Methods

- Stress induced changes to the *in-utero* environment can affect fetal development and increase the risk of later life disease^[1].
- Cyclone exposure has been associated with preterm births, low birthweight, and labour complications^[2].
- Twelve mothers participated in semi-structured interviews. Transcripts were coded and thematic analysis was used to identify major themes. We present preliminary findings from this analysis.

Maternal Characteristics

- Mothers varied in their age, location and cyclones experienced.

Age

Location

Cyclone



Significance

- In Australia, research into individual maternal experiences of disaster related stressors remains limited while research supporting the associated adverse outcomes is growing^[3, 4].
- As we continue to adapt to severe weather events, understanding stressors for pregnant women, a health risk priority group, is crucial to better prepare and mitigate impact.

Themes

Drivers of risk perception

Maternal Experiences

- Looking out for others / others looking out for them
- Familiarity with cyclones
- Being pregnant in the lead up, during and after a cyclone
- Convergence of experiences
- Navigating emergency protocols

Awareness and evaluation of cyclone risk communication

- Social media, internet & apps
- News, television & radio
- Visual
- Word of mouth
- Sensationalisation
- Other information sources

Maternal appraisal of cyclone events

- Introspection and feelings
- Awareness of experience and recollection of events
- Gratitude and perspective

Quotes

“And so we're rushing around to get food and make sure that we've got formula...to make sure that we've got enough food and nappies...when it's just adults you just go, 'We'll eat bread or fruit,' whatever.”

“I guess my family's probably definitely more easy-going people and more typical, you know, Aussie people, you know, 'She'll be right' and all of that.”

“...probably the local radio station or local news from the BoM. I'm not actually big on social media and certainly wasn't back then either.”

“You know, when you listen to the news, they tend to sensationalise a lot of stuff. So we didn't even listen to the news.”

“I was an SES volunteer and knowing that I couldn't help my mates made me feel helpless.”

“I was petrified of going into labor during the cyclone...I did have difficulties with no power and no air con as my clothes didn't fit - I wore my husband's boxers. My work had limited staff on hand and didn't ask me to work until the power was on due to my pregnancy.”

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