

Support for the unique challenges faced by culturally diverse fathers benefits the whole family

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New research has revealed support and services for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) fathers is lacking, however culturally

specific peer support programs and tailored resources are benefiting the whole family.

Western Sydney University in partnership with the PREPARE Foundation, have developed research-informed [video resources](#) designed to support new and expectant fathers from CALD backgrounds as they transition into parenthood, with a follow-up feasibility study showing positive results.

Project lead, Associate Professor Rakime Elmir, at the University's School of Nursing and Midwifery, says the initial research had revealed CALD fathers experience overwhelming pressure to meet socio-cultural expectations of being the provider, supporter, and protector of the family, and that the cost of accessing support and services can be a prohibitive barrier.

Additionally, research has shown that during the perinatal period—the time from pregnancy up until one year following the birth of the baby—both mothers and fathers experience mixed emotions and challenges as they transition into parenthood, with CALD fathers facing additional challenges.

"The challenges in the perinatal period can be even greater for fathers from culturally diverse backgrounds, particularly men who are recent migrants or refugees, because the social and cultural expectations of fathers differ across cultures," said Associate Professor Elmir.

"The ability to seek support is influenced by [cultural beliefs](#) including understandings of gender roles, faith and religious beliefs, as well as socio-economic status."

Associate Professor Elmir adds that research has revealed fathers have a significant impact on maternal well-being including pregnancy outcomes

such as mode of birth and the child's physical, mental, behavioral, social, and [emotional development](#).

"It's important that dads are also supported during the [perinatal period](#) to ensure positive outcomes for the whole family. In some cultures, it is viewed as a sign of weakness or taboo for men to express feelings and emotions when it comes to reflecting on birth, so our video resources aim to address this gap in support with a more holistic, family-centered approach."

The video resources are co-designed with fathers with lived experience and cover topics such as traditional fatherhood, the joys and challenges of fatherhood, tips for expectant and new fathers and advice from health professionals.

Dr. Elmir emphasized that fathers can also experience perinatal mental health, with the rates of postnatal depression in fathers between 8% and 10%.

"Our feasibility study has shown the videos are helping to normalize and empower fathers to seek support and speak with [health professionals](#) for advice and share their experiences with other fathers to mitigate distress and anxiety post birth and the transition to fatherhood," said Dr. Elmir.

"Investing in support for [fathers](#) not only improves father's health and well-being, it's positively impacting the father-infant bond, their children's growth and development, and also improves the support that mothers receive from their partners."

Provided by Western Sydney University

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