FI Research Summary: Supportive fathers, healthy mothers

• Risk of inadequate prenatal care and preterm birth is increased when partners do not share pregnancy intentions or when neither partner intended the pregnancy (Hohmann-Marriott, 2009).

• In Bangladesh researchers found that husbands who understand the risk of pregnancy complications will support their wife’s use of appropriate services (Chowdhury et al. 2007).

• In Niger recruiting husbands to understand the importance of their wives’ receiving ante-natal care and giving birth in clinics resulted in increased rates of prenatal care and assisted and safe deliveries; reduced infant mortality; the construction new community facilities for women and midwives; and changes in the men’s attitudes and behavior (UNFPA, 2011).

• In the US, low income fathers who accompany the mother on a prenatal visit are more likely to engage in father-child activities later in the child’s life (Vogel et al, 2003)

• Mother-to-child transmission of HIV can be better prevented when support from their husbands/partners enables mothers to reveal their HIV status to their partner and comply with their medication (Mwanyika-Sando, 2013; Sherr & Croome, 2012).

• A father’s involvement in the pregnancy increases the likelihood that a woman will receive prenatal care in her first trimester by 40 percent and reduces her cigarette consumption by 36 percent (Martin et al, 2007).

• A review of nine cohort studies published in international peer-reviewed journals found ‘partner’s smoking habit’ to be one of the key determinants of a pregnant woman’s smoking (Lu et al, 2001).

• An expectant mother’s quitting smoking is consistently associated with her partner’s provision of support for her quitting – and by his quitting himself (for review, see McBride et al, 2004).

• In New Zealand, nearly one third of prospective fathers changed their dietary and smoking behaviours during their partners’ pregnancies (Pryor et al, 2014). Partner support during pregnancy may encourage healthier maternal behaviour, for example with regard to cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption (Lu et al, 2010).
• In the USA, when the father’s name is on the birth certificate, racial/ethnic disparities in infant mortality rates are reduced substantially, as is infant mortality itself. Paternal absence widens the black-white gap in infant mortality almost four-fold; 65-75% of excess infant mortality could be prevented with increased paternal involvement (Alio et al, 2011).

• Expectant fathers can be influential advocates for breastfeeding by playing a critical role in encouraging a mother to breastfeed the newborn infant (Wolfberg et al. 2004).

• Mothers feel more capable and confident about breastfeeding when they perceive their partner is supportive by way of verbal encouragement and active involvement in breastfeeding activities (Mannion et al, 2013).

• Education and support about breastfeeding for fathers improve breastfeeding rates (Maycock et al, 2013)

• For both mother and father, the ability to cope with the demands of a new baby depends above all on the quality of the relationship between them (Berman & Pederson, 1987).

• The quality of mothering provided to an infant has been linked with supports the mother receives from her partner (for review, see Guterman & Lee, 2005).

• Women who enjoy the full support of their partners are more closely bonded to their children, and more responsive and sensitive to their needs (Feiring, 1976).

• A young mother’s perception of support from her baby’s father correlates with a range of positive attachment behaviours by her (Bloom, 1998).

• Greater father involvement in infant care and other household tasks is correlated with lower parenting stress and depression in mothers (for review, see Fisher et al, 2006).

• Reducing mothers’ sole responsibility for infants and young children through more active paternal care, and supporting mothers to interact with adults outside the child-rearing arena (for example, in employment) are likely to contribute to better mental health among mothers and reduced parenting stress (Hrdy, 2009 – pp 168-171).

Please use the COMMENT facility below to tell us about other high quality research relevant to this research summary.

REFERENCES


