NEW PARENT PEER EDUCATORS EXPERIENCES IN INFANT/CHILD FEEDING: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM THE PICNIC PROJECT

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Objective

To explore perceptions and lived experiences of new parent Nutrition Peer Educators in their role supporting other parents infant and child feeding.

Methodology

94 new parents with an infant aged 0-2 years received training and ongoing support in infant/child feeding and nutrition to fulfil the role as peer educators.

Peer Educators engage as co-researchers in the ongoing development of the PICNIC model in a Participatory Action Research approach over 12 months.

A health-professional administered, project-specific website and social media pages ensure that evidence-based information is disseminated.

Ethnographic analysis of comments on the PICNIC closed Facebook group investigated the experiences of peer educators and information recipients.

Next steps include analysis of the impact of the PICNIC project on parent feeding practices, diet quality and experiences of parents who have had their infant feeding supported by peer education.

Implications

Peer education with an online support component provides an avenue to widely distribute evidence-based infant/child nutrition and feeding information.
The peer nutrition education process is beneficial to the parental efficacy and child feeding practices of peer educators and their recipients.

The findings about information integrity, impact and uptake will inform future website and social media content. Future analysis of the impact of the PICNIC project peer educators and peer education recipients feeding practices and dietary intake will make an important contribution to community-based early life nutrition research.

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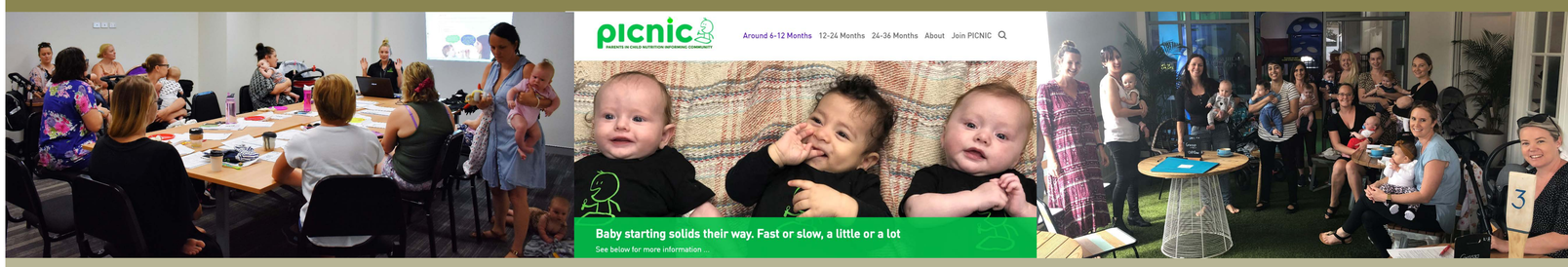
PARENTS IN CHILD NUTRITION INFORMING COMMUNITY

New parent **peer education** works for sharing evidence based **infant/child** nutrition and **feeding** information.



Lessons Learned

Trust in messages and support develops (between peer educators, with peer groups and with the PICNIC team).

Facebook and Face to Face are the most effective ways to share information between new parents, including the **demonstration and validation of feeding practices** by peer educators.

Parents of **younger infants/ 1st time parents** are more receptive to nutrition and feeding messages with family (especially grandparents) least receptive.

Messages on **behaviours in the feeding environment** were perceived as more useful than general nutrition messages.

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