What Is The Effectiveness Of Interventions For The Prevention Or Treatment Of Paternal Perinatal Anxiety: A Systematic Review?

Dyer, M.L., Sutcliffe, P.A., Ajisola, M., Southern, C., Grove, A.L., and, Tan, B.K.

Corresponding Author: Michelle Dyer
michelle.dyer@warwick.ac.uk @MichelleDyerPMH

1. Background

Research on paternal perinatal anxiety (PPA) lacking and fragmented compared to maternal research
Worldwide prevalence of PPA 3.4% - 25.0% antenatally and 2.4% - 51.0% postnatally [1]
NHS Long Term Plan highlighted need to provide mental health screening and treatment to dads [2]
Dads report poor mental health and express needs to enhance mental health across the perinatal period [3]
In the UK men account for three quarters of deaths by suicide [4]

2. Methods

Systematic Review - Medline, EMBASE, PsycINFO, Web of Science up to 2nd December 2021, plus hand searches (see *Fig. 1*)

PROSPERO; CRD42020165609

Inclusion criteria

P: Males, over 18, and partners of pregnant women or with a baby up to 12-months old
I: Any preventive or treatment intervention
C: Any standard care provision or control activity
O: Reduction in reported anxiety scores using any validated scale
S: RCTs

Outcome measures

1. Anxiety scores (STAI, SAS, DASS, HADS)
   - ✓ Self-assessed symptoms
   - ✓ Parent-infant bonding
   - ✓ Adverse events and suicidal thoughts
   - ✓ Use of technology

Funded by Warwick Medical School as part of a PhD research project

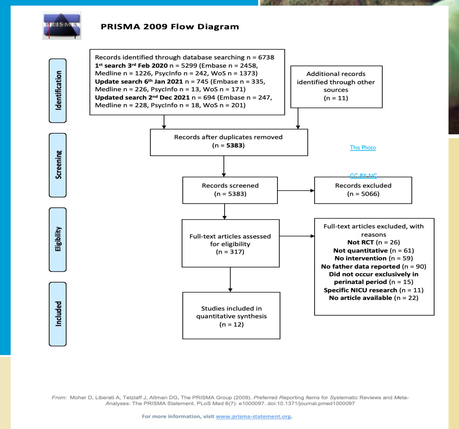
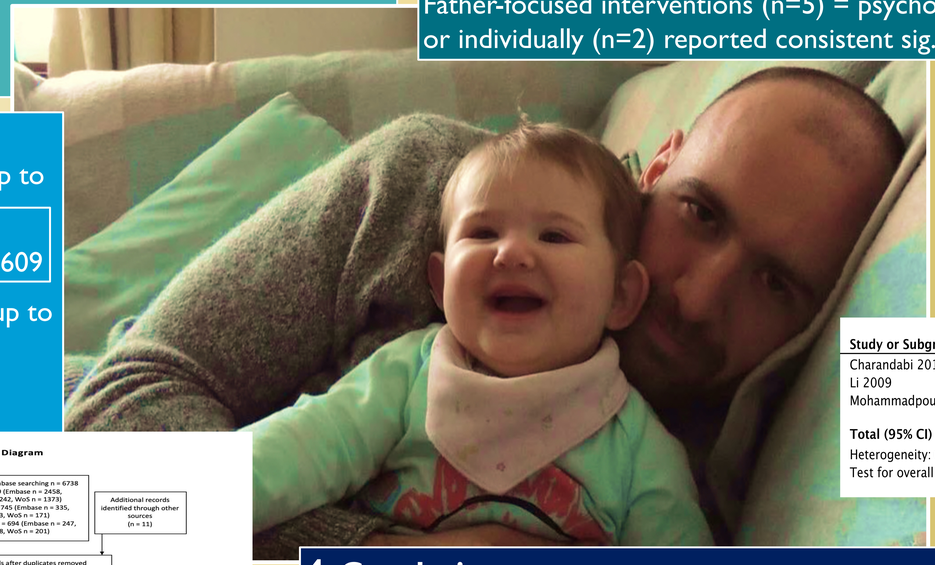


Fig. 1 PRISMA flow diagram



3. Results

"Father-focused interventions consistently show significant intervention effect"

12 articles identified, low-medium risk of bias (see *fig.* 2) **Only preventive interventions found**
Interventions are psychoeducational (n=9), or practical skills (n=3)
Three studies considered PPA as a primary outcome
All PPA outcomes were self-reported by participants
Father-focused interventions (n=5) = psychoeducational (n=3) or practical skills (n=2), delivered in groups (n=3) or individually (n=2) reported consistent sig. effect on PPA (see *fig.* 3 for psychoeducational post-hoc analysis)

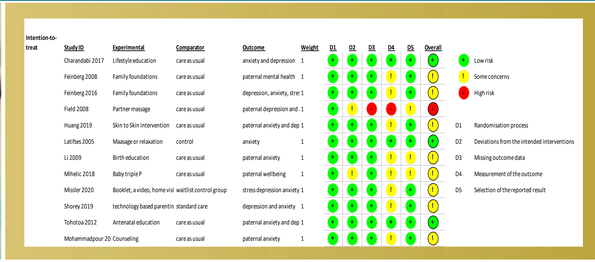


Fig. 2 Cochranes risk of bias assessments

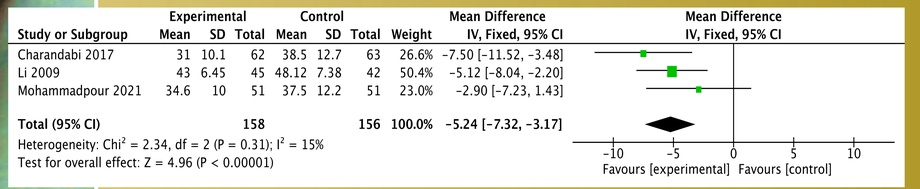


Fig. 3 Fixed effect meta-analysis of father-focused psychoeducational

4. Conclusions

Prevention-based interventions identified are small in number and heterogeneous in terms of aims, delivery modes, outcome measures.
There is evidence to suggest that father-focussed psychoeducational and practical skills interventions could help support new and expectant fathers, preventing incidents of anxiety in new or expectant fathers within the perinatal mental health period.

1. Philpott LF, Savage E, FitzGerald S, Leahy-Warren P. Anxiety in fathers in the perinatal period: A systematic review.
2. NHS 2019. The NHS Long Term Plan. https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk
3.. ROMINOV, H., PILKINGTON, P. D., GIALLO, R. & WHELAN, T. A. 2016. A systematic review of interventions targeting paternal mental health in the perinatal period.
4. ONS, 2019. Suicides in the UK: 2018 registrations. https://www.ons.gov.uk/